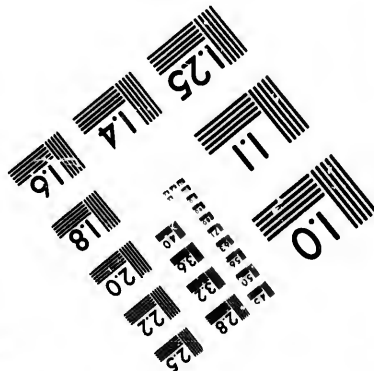
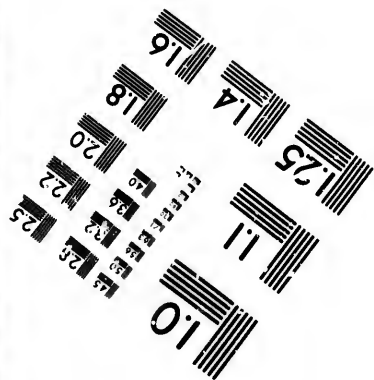
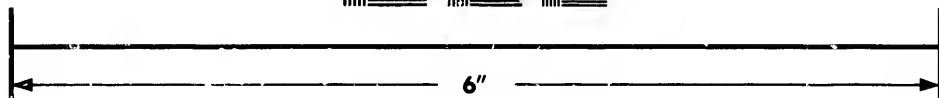
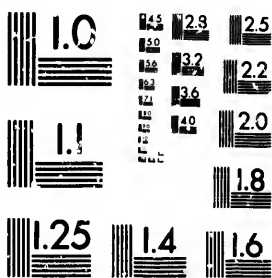


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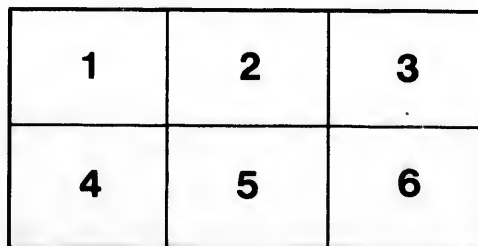
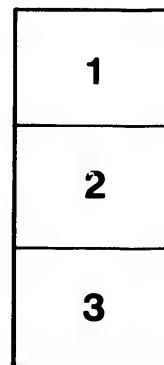
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Page 19.

THE BOAT ON THE MARENCE

TOMLINSON

"THE LANCELOT" "THE BOYS
"THE SEED" "THE BRAYS"
"THE GLOTTON" "WASH-
"THE BOYS OF
"ETC. ETC."

A. P. SMITH

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS
1880



BERT THREW HIMSELF FACE FORWARD UPON THE GROUND. Page 19.

THE HOUSE-BOAT ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

AUTHOR OF "CAMPING ON THE ST. LAWRENCE," "THE BOYS
WITH OLD HICKORY," "TECUMSEH'S YOUNG BRAVES"
"A JERSEY BOY IN THE REVOLUTION," "WASH-
INGTON'S YOUNG AIDS," "THE BOYS OF
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BOSTON

LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS

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THE HOUSE-BOAT ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

Norwood Press
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PREFACE.

IN this tale the purpose of the writer has been to record such experiences as a party of four college friends might have had (and, indeed, did have) in a summer spent upon the historic and beautiful St. Lawrence. It is his belief that the younger readers have no fondness for the deeply laid plot or the introspective and analytic novel so dear to the hearts of their elders. Who shall say that their uncorrupted taste is the worse for that fact?

It is also the writer's belief that young people are naturally interested in the historical records of their own land. This interest is not, perhaps, in the philosophy of history or in the lessons which history teaches, but rests upon the actions and stirring experiences of bygone years. And this is the pathway which leads to the larger regions beyond.

Acting upon such a belief, whether it be correct or no, the writer has endeavored to

interest his readers in some of the eventful deeds of one of the leaders of men in the New World in its earlier days. If they shall be led to make further investigations of their own and to read some of the noble works of the great historians, he will feel that his labor has not been lost.

In a word, the aim of the writer of this story has been to present a healthful and natural tale of the experiences of four boys who themselves were not so good as to be compelled to die young nor so bad as to be unworthy of the friendship of all, and at the same time to incorporate some of the historic events which belong to the place and the time. The many kind letters he has received from his young readers has led him to believe that he has not entirely misunderstood their wishes and aims.

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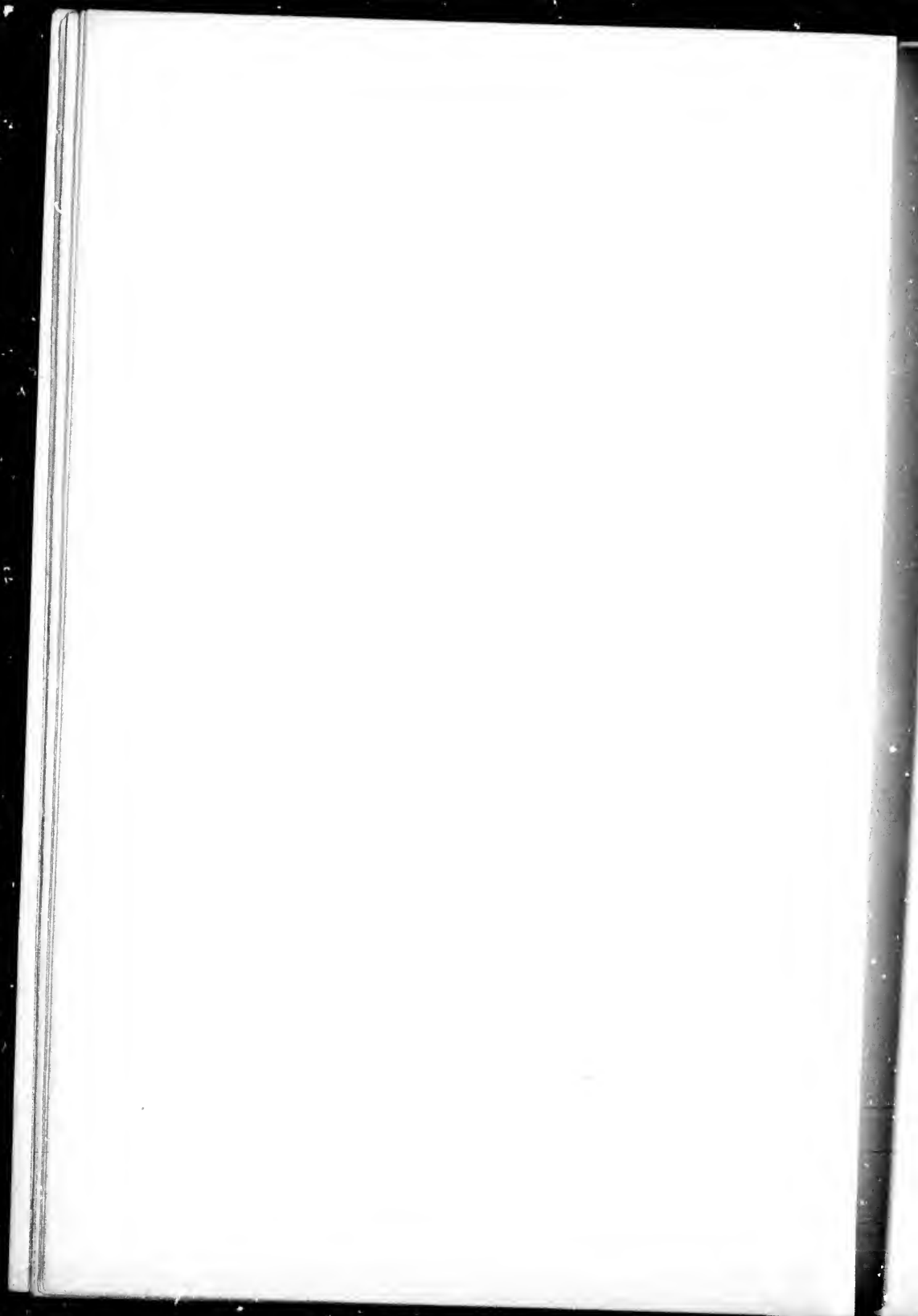
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THE HOUSE-BOAT ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

CHAPTER I.

COLLEGE FRIENDS.

THE June morning had dawned cloudless and clear. A slight haze covered the summits of the hills which enclosed the beautiful Berkshire valley, but the beams of the summer sun would soon burn this away; and the heart of every college boy was correspondingly rejoiced, for nothing would now interfere with the ball game between the long-time rival colleges.

Crowds of alumni had been pouring into Williamstown, and now every room in the hotels had been taken, cots in the halls were at a premium, and even the boarding-house keepers were smiling as complacently as the bonifaces, for the thrifty New England folk knew there were other harvests to be reaped besides those garnered on the wheat-fields. Boys who had come up for

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their entrance examinations were to be seen among the stately buildings, or wandering with their natural protectors along the village streets, staring in undisguised admiration at these wonderful fellows who had successfully passed through that ordeal which was so trying to them. They were wondering also whether the requirements for admission had been as severe in other years, and whether the "higher standard of admission" had not been decided upon at just the most inconvenient period in their own brief experiences.

Crowds of gayly dressed young ladies — sisters, cousins, friends of the students — were also in town; and nothing but the festivities of Commencement week could account for the numbers of people in the village, which all through the long months of the winter had been apparently cut off from the great world outside.

Groups of students could be seen along the winding paths, and frequently the shouts of laughter or the music of some rollicking college song rose on the summer air, and added to the deep strong interest which seemed to permeate all things. Even the ivy-covered buildings shimmered under

the summer sun, and the foliage trembled and glistened with a brighter green than it had usually worn. Nature herself apparently had entered into the heartiness of the young life that abounded in the college town; and the very joy of living for the time had banished all other thoughts. Even the terrible "exams" were now things of the past, and belonged to that remote period of human life when Cæsar fought Pompey or Pompey fought Cæsar, perhaps few could have told which and fewer still would have cared.

In the window of one of the rooms in Morgan Hall two young fellows were seated, looking down with interest and animation upon the stirring scenes in the street below, and frequently breaking in upon their conversation with remarks concerning the interest of the "old grads," or the no less eager attention of the girls or boys who had come to town with their fathers to visit with them the scenes of former college days.

"It's strange how these old fellows seem to think this college belongs to them," remarked Jock Cope, one of the two students referred to as viewing the animated scene

from the windows of Morgan Hall. "I never think of it in that way, for it always seems to me as if Williams belongs to the fellows who are now here."

"Just wait till you are an old bald-headed alumnus yourself," laughed Albert, or "Bert," Bliss, his companion.

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait a long time for that. Who knows whether I'll ever be an 'old grad' anyway. I felt old enough when I got through with that Greek paper yesterday, but something besides old age will be required by the faculty, I'm afraid, before they'll let my name be enrolled on the scroll of fame."

"Nonsense! you've done good work all the year, Jock, and you know it as well as I do. You'll pull through in fine shape."

"I hope so," replied Jock, evidently reassured somewhat by the confidence of his friend. "If I only felt half as sure of myself as you do, I think I'd bear up."

"You mean my confidence in myself or my confidence in you?"

"Either," laughed Jock.

"Well, 'tis a fine thing not to be easily cast down, my friend; I have been young and now am old, yet never have I seen a

man with 'nerve' driven out of his place. Even when I've been called upon in class to explain some things in the lesson which the professor didn't quite seem to see as he ought to, to say nothing of the rest of you poor little freshmen, you can't imagine how often I've done it when I had mighty little to call on, — no reserve power, so to speak. I think that's what you call it."

"Oh, yes, I can imagine that a good deal more easily than you think I can," responded Jock. "It's a wise man who knows that he doesn't know; but when a fellow doesn't know even that and yet stands up and talks as glibly as if he really did know it all, why, the sight's sublime, that's what it is. And often, alas! have I seen you there."

"That's what you have, too often. Wasn't I called up seven days in succession in geometry, and every time I thought surely the professor would pass me by, as I'd been up the day before, and consequently I was relying upon my previous record. 'Tis a cold, cold world, Jock, and there's no sympathy in it. I wonder what we ever study mathematics for anyway. For my part I think it's stuff and nonsense."

"To discipline your mind, freshman," laughed his friend.

"So I've been informed. Your reply is eminently wise. But, as I said, I never could see any use in it outside of a lunatic asylum. Why, Jock, ever since my childhood days, long, long ago, when I used to read of the man who was driving through the country and stopped to ask the farmer how many sheep there were in that flock — or perhaps it was pigs or chickens, I don't remember which — and the honest son of the soil would explain if one-half of one-sixth of one-ninth of the flock was taken away and sixteen were added, he would have altogether two-thirds of ninety-nine-billionths of ninety-nine, and one-thousandth part of one-seventh, I've had no use for mathematics. I tell you no one but a raving lunatic would talk like that. And here they are keeping up the same old game after we got into college. I'm sick and tired of the whole thing."

"It disciplines your mind, I tell you," repeated Jock, laughing again at the mock earnestness of his classmate.

"So I've heard you, and others who know as much as you do, remark; but I

freshman,"

My reply is
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tell you it's nonsense, sheer nonsense! When I get into business, you don't suppose a man will come into my office, or my father's, which is the same thing, and tell me he'd like to buy one-sixteenth of one-quarter of one-third of a cargo of coal and that if six-thirds of two-ninths of seven-tenths of nine hundred and seventeen and one-eighth were added to the number, I'd find out just what his order was. Not much! If such a man should come in, I'd slide out the back door and call, 'Police!' as loudly as my feeble voice would permit. That's what I'd do and so would you, freshman."

"But your father is a lawyer and doesn't deal in coal."

"It's all one and the same thing. Do you think he'd tell a client of his he'd charge him seven-eighths of one-ninth of six-thirteenths of the sum in litigation? I know not."

"No, he'd probably tell him he'd take the whole thing himself, and that there wouldn't be even a fraction of a fraction left for the poor man who had brought the suit."

"And serve him right, too, if he did, for he had no business to go to law in the first

place, and then, besides, he ought not to forget that my father has me to look out for, and a son in college is a luxury in these days, I'd have you understand. It isn't every man that has that privilege. Hello!" he suddenly broke in, as he caught sight of his own room-mate in the street below, "there's Spike. Hey, Spike!" he called, "what are you standing down there for? Come up here into Jock's room. He's going to treat."

The young man thus hailed glanced up at the window, and then, quickly turning about, made his way up the stairway and soon entered the room. As he came in, the meaning of the sobriquet by which he had been hailed was at once made plain. The name by which his parents originally had called him was Benjamin Dallett, but the irreverent college boys had substituted "Spike" as being much more accurate and far more expressive of his true nature. He was very tall, standing considerably more than six feet in height, but he was very thin and wiry, and the lack of development laterally, whatever the vertical may have been, had been the source of the new name which had been bestowed upon him the

very first day after he had entered college. His room-mate, Albert Bliss, who had been having the conversation with Josiah, or "Jock," Cope already recorded, was a short, sturdy young fellow, the exact opposite, in many respects, of his friend. In character, too, they had supplemented each other, and the friendship formed in their early boyhood had continued throughout their school days, and now that they were in college the feeling had strengthened with the passing days.

Yet strong as was their affection for each other, they both united in a common love for Jock Cope, in whose room they now were. He was unlike both his friends in that he was a somewhat delicate lad, though in no wise effeminate, and the selection of the college among the Berkshire hills had been made by his parents with the hope that something of the strength of the hills might be given the only boy left to them of several children who had entered their home, only to remain for a few brief years and then disappear forever. The choice made by Jock, or rather by his parents, which was much the same thing, had been sufficient to induce his long-time friends to enter Will-

iams with him ; and now the freshman year was ended, and no one had regretted the decision, for it is safe to say that no more loyal sons of Old Williams were to be found than were these three students. Benjamin Dallett and Albert Bliss had continued to be room-mates in college as they had been in the preparatory school, and Jock Cope had induced his friend Robert, or "Bob," Darnell to share his room in Morgan Hall ; and though for a time the aforesaid Bob had been absent, in spirit he was no less a member of the quartette than if he had been present in the body.

Necessity had compelled him to stay out of college for a part of the spring term in order to earn some money with which to continue his course, for, unlike his three friends, Bob had but little wealth, and as his mother was a widow he had resolved to depend as much as in him was upon his own resources. Accordingly, when early in the preceding May word had come to him from Ethan, the boatman whom they had had almost a year before this time in their camp among the Thousand Islands,¹ that the schoolmaster at the Corners had

¹ See "Camping on the St. Lawrence."

been taken suddenly ill and would be unable to complete the school year, Bob had eagerly accepted the offer which had been made for him to take the place, and at this very time he was engaged in the task of "training the young ideas" in the little hamlet on the far-away St. Lawrence.

The absence of Bob Darnell was deeply regretted, not only by his three friends, but by his classmates and the entire college, for the matter of that. He was keen of mind, somewhat slow of speech, very droll at times, and unusually popular with all his mates. Without apparent exertion he had gained a rank near the forefront of his class, and as he had been the only member to make the "varsity" nine, there were more reasons than one why his absence at this particular time was lamented. The substitute who had taken his place in left field was not regarded in a particularly favorable light, and there were many misgivings as to what the outcome might be in the game which was about to be played.

As Benjamin, or "Ben," Dallett entered the room where his two friends were seated in the window, he said: "Bring out your treat! What is it?"

"Oh, this is a feast of reason, not a flow of soul," responded Bert. "Here's Jock, he's been trying to tell me there's some use in grubbing out mathematics."

Ben laughed as he replied, "I'm glad I came. I haven't had a treat of that kind, lo, these many years."

"That's all right, Spike," laughed Jock, good-naturedly. "I've only been trying to show this benighted freshman that when a fireman shovels coal under the boiler he isn't doing it because he expects to get coal again."

"Right you are. He's doing it for thirty-five dollars a month."

"It's all the same thing. That's the very thing I'm talking about."

"You needn't worry about this innocent," said Ben. "Bert studies like a hero, and even sits up nights to read his books. He likes to talk, but he's all right when it comes to the other part too."

"I have to study," said Bert, soberly. "What would become of Spike if I didn't? Some one has to do the work. You remember what Ethan said last summer about that team of horses he had, don't you?"

"No, I've forgotten," said Jock. "What was it he said?"

"Why, he said that one of the horses was willing to do all the work, and the other one was perfectly willing that he should. That's the way it is with us."

"Trust Bert to make his *horse* work," retorted Ben, and even Bert was compelled to join in the laugh which followed. "I say, fellows, why don't we go down to the field? The people are all going, and it's only three-quarters of an hour before the game."

In a moment his friends joined him, and together the trio started toward Weston Field. On their way they stopped at the post-office, and as they started on again, Jock said, "I've a letter here from Bob."

"Come on, don't stop to read it here," said Ben, eagerly. "Wait till we are in the grand stand. We'll be late if we don't move on."

So, thrusting the letter into his pocket, Jock joined his companions and the crowd which already was making its way toward the field where the contest between the rival colleges was to take place.

CHAPTER II.

THE GAME.

WHEN the three boys took their seats in the grand stand and looked about them over the field it was a sight they saw which would have quickened the pulses of even the most sluggish. Tally-ho coaches, drags, open wagons, and conveyances of various kinds and descriptions bordered the field; and as many of these were occupied by young people who had driven to Williamstown from the different resorts of Berkshire County, their gay appearance and brilliant decorations added much to the inspiration of the scene. Banners, flags, and streamers waved in the summer breeze, and from all sides cheers and college cries were already rising. Directly in front of the three students in whom we are particularly interested sat a row of bald-headed alumni (the boys knew they were bald because their hats were frequently removed from their heads

and waved in the air as the "old grads" hailed some former acquaintance or doffed them in greeting to some lady friend) who were shouting as lustily as their younger companions. The crowds were steadily increasing, and old men were slapping one another upon the back as with glistening eyes they recognized comrades of bygone years. There was, however, one peculiarity in the salutations, and that was, that almost invariably the older men hailed their friends as "boys," while the younger alumni always called out, "Glad to see you, 'old man'!"

On one side of the field a large body of Amherst men had assembled, and though they were fewer in numbers than the supporters of the local college team, it was evident that they would be able to give a good account of themselves when encouragement for their own sturdy nine was called for. Overhead, the summer sky was soft and glowing, and the near-by mountains seemed to stand in silence and dignity as if they too were interested spectators of the animated scene at their feet. It was a perfect summer day, and the mere joy of living for the time seemed to be sufficient of itself

to satisfy the demands of all. Dignified clergymen, staid lawyers, successful business men, members of the college faculty, were all there, and, for the hour, the very cares of life were forgotten and the perpetual youth of college and valley were reflected in the glowing faces. Again and again some one, usually an appointed leader, started a college song, and the echoes would be awakened as the rollicking words rose from the entire assembly. There were cheers for the rival nines, and for the individual members of the team; and, indeed, before the game was begun more than one of the spectators found his voice already becoming husky, and giving premonitions of failing before the crucial time should come.

At last, however, the preliminary practice was ended, the crowd had all assembled, and the time when the game was to be called had arrived. For a moment there was a silence as the Amherst men took their places in the field, and a moment later there was a prolonged cheer which was repeated again and again when the first of the Williams batters advanced to the plate. Banners were flung out once more, flags were waved, and the entire assembly arose and

stood for several minutes. To all appearances the most unconcerned of all was the sturdy batsman who stood facing the opposing nine, awaiting the beginning of the game. The umpire tossed the ball to the pitcher, who took it and thoughtfully and slowly rubbed it in his hands, and then, taking his stand in the box, drew back his arm and sent the ball swiftly over the plate.

“One strike!” called the umpire, and a sigh arose from the crowd.

Again the curving ball came swiftly in, and once more the umpire shouted, “Two strikes!”

A cheer arose from the Amherst contingent, and something very like a groan was heard from the grand stand. Jock was leaning forward, breathlessly watching Burt, the batter and captain of the Williams nine, confident and yet fearful that he might fail to meet the expectations of his supporters.

Once more the ball came in, this time moving slowly and with a deceptive, alluring motion, but Burt was not to be tempted.

“One ball!” shouted the umpire; and then, as the ball was quickly returned to the pitcher, that sturdy gentleman with an unexpected motion sent it back with almost in-

credible speed. But Burt was ready, and almost before the excited assembly perceived what had occurred, the ball was skipping over the ground between right and centre field, and the runner had started for second base.

The shrill shout that had burst from the lips of the beholders died away, and in breathless suspense they all waited and watched as the ball was deftly and quickly fielded and thrown swiftly toward second base. Burt was within a few yards of the coveted base now, but the baseman was standing before him with outstretched hands. In a moment the question would be decided, and glory for his achievement, or blame for his recklessness in attempting to make a two-base hit of what was really only safe for one, would be bestowed upon the runner.

Jock Cope gripped one of his friends tightly by the arm and pushed as if he thought he was helping by his action the daring Williams captain to gain his base. All the spectators were leaning forward from their seats, and the silence that rested over Weston Field was intense.

Suddenly Burt threw himself face for-

ward upon the ground and slid toward the coveted bag. There was a cloud of dust, a strange mix-up of men, and then, when it was seen that out of the confusion Burt was safe on the second base, such a shout went up as even Old Greylock had seldom heard.

When Page, the Williams pitcher, grasped his bat and advanced to the plate, the cheers and shouts were renewed, and when, with a mighty swing of his bat, he smote the first ball delivered and sent it into almost the very place where Burt's hit had gone, and Burt himself came racing home, it was as if pandemonium itself reigned supreme. Hats were in the air, flags were waved, the ladies were adding their shrill treble to the volume of sound, and it seemed as if for the moment all semblance of dignity and self-control were scattered to the winds.

"Rattled!" exclaimed Bert, delightedly. "We've got them on the run! I don't wonder that the St. Louis team want Burt and Page. They're a battery worth having! You don't often see such fellows!"

"They're great, and no mistake," replied Jock. "But the game's young yet. There's

many a slip, and we haven't won till the last man in the ninth inning is out. Besides, I feel sorry for the Amherst fellows."

"So do I, I'm full of sympathy for them. But then they ought to know better than to think they can play with us: They ought to get a game with the fellows that belong to their class."

The conversation was interrupted when the next striker went out, and a determined cheer rose from the opposing crowd. This was speedily returned, however, when another Williams man made a long hit, and, aided by an error, when the inning closed three runs had been scored by the Williams nine.

In no wise daunted, the Amherst men came in to bat, and for a time the clouds seemed to gather when they too began to hit the ball, and two runs had been scored before the side was disposed of. So the score remained until the fifth inning, which proved to be almost a repetition of the first. Again Burt and Page, who were the heaviest hitters of the Williams nine, sent the crowd wild when one of them made a three-base hit and the other one for two bases, and both crossed the home plate

before the end of the inning. The shouts and songs of the crowd were as lusty as ever, but the voices of many were becoming husky by this time. Indeed, one of the "old grads" in front of our boys was hardly able to speak above a whisper; but his spirit was still strong though the vocal cords were weak. He still swung his hat and danced about with all the enthusiasm of a boy.

To the consternation of the Williams men the Amherst nine also succeeded in scoring twice in this inning, and the vociferous din of their supporters was strangely subduing to their rivals. Still, the score was five to four in favor of Williams, and, determined to make the most of the advantage they still had, the songs and cheers of the home supporters once more broke forth with renewed energy.

"I don't believe Smith can make a noise, fellows," said Jock, pointing as he spoke to the young fellow on the ground below who was leading the singing. "His voice is all gone and he just goes through the motions."

"That doesn't matter as long as he can make the rest of us sing."

"I hope you don't call that noise you make singing."

"No; it's nothing but a joyful noise," replied Jock, as he once more tried to join in "The Mountains," which Smith, the choragus, had somehow managed to start again.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth innings passed, and neither nine was able to score, though twice the Amherst men managed to get a man as far as third base. Both teams were playing desperately, and the long rivalry of the two colleges seemed to find expression in their efforts. Almost no errors were made, and the few hits were so well handled that the runners were seldom able to gain anything. The score was so close that the feelings of the crowd were kept at the keenest tension, and when at last the ninth inning began, the excitement even increased over that which before had been manifested. The cheering was like a hoarse cry now, but apparently there was no repressing it. The faces of the elder alumni were flushed, and their efforts were almost visibly painful; but cheer they must and cheer they would. Many were standing, and the purple flags were never

still. Even the players themselves seemed to feel the strain, and, though the Williams men had a lead of one run, the margin was too narrow to admit of much confidence.

The first of the Williams batters to face the opposing pitcher was given his base on balls, and for a moment the delight of the crowd threatened to vent itself "in cheering an opponent's error"; but, as this was regarded as the highest form of discourtesy, it was quickly repressed. When the second batter also gained his base on an error again the assembly threatened to break all bounds, but as Burt stepped forth and raised his hand in token of silence the outburst was quickly suppressed.

It was now his turn to bat again, and the shout which arose when he grasped his bat and advanced to the plate could not be checked. All things appeared favorable, and as he was one of the heaviest hitters, and there were two men on the bases, the prospect of more runs was bright. When Burt lifted the ball high over the head of the right fielder, the response was more like a wild cry of a mob than the cheer of an orderly body. On and on ran the runners, while the fielder with desper-

ate haste started after the ball. One man crossed the plate, and the shouting was deafening. On came the second runner, and the crowd was still more wild. A momentary hush came when Burt himself started for home, and when the ball was sent swiftly in to the catcher, and the runner was caught between the bases, a brief silence followed, and at last, when he was touched with the ball and was out, his friends even then were not to be daunted.

“What’s the matter with Burt?” called one of the leaders of the cheering.

“He-e-e’s all right!” shouted the assembly in reply, as all rose to their feet, and shouts and long-continued cheering followed.

As the two batters to follow both went out on little in-field hits, and the last inning for Williams was thereby ended, feeling as if the game had already been won the crowd once more seemed to lose control of itself, and while the nine were passing to their places in the field and the Amherst men were coming in, the scene beggared description.

“Even the horses are dancing,” shouted Jock, as he slapped Ben upon the back.

"We've a lead of three runs, and they'll never catch up now."

"Wait," replied Ben. "The last man in the last inning isn't out yet."

"That's what the Amherst fellows are thinking, if one can judge from the racket they're making," said Bert.

The supporters of the Amherst nine had now risen, and, standing closely together, were making the air resound with their shouts. They cheered for the nine and for every player as he came in to the benches, and when the first batter faced Page, their efforts still further increased, as if by their lung powers they would add to the strength of the sturdy players. When a few minutes later he ran nimbly to first base, having been presented with four balls, their enthusiastic shouting redoubled in volume. When the next batter sent a little pop-up fly to the short-stop, and to the horror of all the Williams men the usually trusty little fielder dropped the ball, the groan from one side of the field was almost as disheartening as was the wild shout that rose from the other. A momentary relief came when the next batter struck out, but as his follower sent a long hit into

the out-field, and one of the men crossed the plate before it could be returned, the anxiety became intense. The following batter also struck out, but there was a man on third and one on second, and Stewart, the heaviest hitter of the Amherst team, was now to bat.

He struck at the first ball sent in, and drove a long foul far back of the left fielder's position. The silence on the Williams side was most intense now, but not so was it among the Amherst contingent. They were wild with excitement, and, to make matters worse, for the moment it almost seemed as if Page, the Williams pitcher, was "rattled." Holding his mask in his hand, Burt now advanced and held a low whispered conversation with Page. What was said was not known, but the anxious feeling of all was only too apparent.

"That's the way with Page," said Ben, gloomily. "He goes up in the air when it comes to the pinch."

"I thought you said St. Louis wanted him," suggested Jock.

"So they do. Keep still now, they're at it again."

Apparently no one required the word of caution, for a deep silence rested over all. Page took the ball, calmly assumed his position in the box, glanced keenly at Stewart, and then sent the ball in with terrific speed. But Stewart was ready, and evidently that was just the ball he had been waiting for. As he struck, it rose high in the air and sailed away, almost like a speck in the sky, out toward left field. The Williams men were silent, but not so were the Amherst boys. They shouted and screamed and hugged one another in their delight. And all the time the ball was high in the air and far in the distance.

"If Bob were only there," murmured Jock, but no one heeded him now. The substitute fielder evidently realized his responsibility. Stopping for an instant, he had gazed intently at the little sphere and then had started swiftly back into the field. On and on he ran, and then, just as the ball settled toward the ground, with one quick movement he turned about, lifted his hands, and stood waiting. A moment later the ball dropped into his outstretched palms, and was tightly held.

Then arose such a shout as Weston

Field had never heard before. Tears stood in the eyes of some of the excited spectators, and the college boys, now that the game had indeed been won, leaped down from their seats and with a mighty rush made for the field. There Page and Burt were lifted upon the shoulders of the excited students, and, with shouts and cheers, and with waving banners and flying streamers, they marched in triumph from the ground. The substitute who had played in place of Bob Darnell in left field was also borne upon the shoulders of his fellows, for there was glory enough and to spare for all who had helped to win the day.

An hour afterward, when our three friends were assembled in Jock's room in Morgan Hall, and the game and victory had been talked over in all their differing aspects, Jock suddenly exclaimed, "I say, fellows, I've a letter here from Bob, and I almost forgot all about it."

"That's right. Tell us what he has to say for himself," said Bert.

Jock glanced hastily at the letter without speaking; and then, all excitement, exclaimed, "This beats the Amherst game

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all to pieces! Bob's a jewel, that's what he is!"

"A rough diamond, or a pearl of great price?" inquired Ben, solemnly.

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear," replied Jock, as he proceeded to read the letter aloud, and in a moment his companions were as eager and excited as he.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROJECT.

“BOB is certainly having a great time,” said Jock, as he folded the letter and thrust it again into the envelope. “I wonder why I wasn’t born without money, for it seems to me the fellows who are earning their way through college get the most out of it. Sometimes I almost envy them; I do, for a fact.”

“I’ll relieve you of any surplus cash that burdens your soul or your pocket,” remarked Bert, dryly. “For my part I’ve never felt the burden you refer to. I’m like the horse-leech, and cry ‘More, more!’”

Jock laughed as he replied, “You know what I mean. I’m not going to disgorge for either of you, though I’d share my last dollar with Bob.”

“If you’d say the last cent, I’m with you,” said Ben, as he drew forth a bright penny from his pocket and held it up to

view. "To that and a ticket to New York am I reduced in my extremity," he added dolefully.

"Read that part of Bob's letter again, will you, Jock?" requested Bert. "I mean the part where he tells about the scheme."

Jock once more drew forth the letter, and, glancing hastily over the pages, began to read aloud the part requested.

"I'm having lots of experience here, and it doesn't come high either (neither does the salary, I may remark in passing). Every morning I see the old St. Lawrence rushing on its way as if it were in haste to leave this part of the world, though just why the Saint should feel so, I do not understand. And yet somehow I feel a little that way myself. Not that I do not enjoy my work, for I do thoroughly; but I have the feeling that I'm a great way off, though just what it is I am so far away from, it would be difficult to say. But here I am, and the great world goes wagging on after its own free will, and there is no one to molest or make me afraid.

"My school is a strange mix-up. I have some pupils older than I am and bigger

too, and then in the same classes with them, there'll be little fellows who hardly come up to the elbows of the big ones. I have seventeen different recitations every day, from 'rithmetic' to 'jography,' as Ethan calls it; and if 'variety is the spice of life,' as some wiseacre has remarked (I don't know who was guilty of the remark, but ask Spike, he'll tell you; and he'll tell you, too, whether he knows anything about it or not), why I ought to rejoice that my life is as spicy as a winter day is to a Williams freshman.

"Then, too, I board with Ethan, you must not forget, or rather with Mrs. Ethan, which is not exactly the same thing. She is a fat, easy-going old lady whom nothing, not even Ethan's ranting about 'city folks,' seems to disturb. She goes right on in the even tenor of her way, or perhaps I should say, for the benefit of Bert, the even soprano of her way, for her voice is pitched high and if ever it changes in its pitch or key, it must be when boarders are not here. She is a motherly soul, though her eyes, as the psalmist says, do seem to 'stand out with fatness.' And she believes in fat. She fries beef and pork and everything that it is possible to fry in grease. But I have not lost

flesh, for the fat itself has been transferred to my delicate frame. And, poor soul, she thinks I must be delicate, and so she urges me to eat — eat — eat. It's a 'fried cake' here, and a piece of pie there, and milk and honey and molasses (maple) between spells. And she makes me sleep in a feather bed. And such a bed! Why, Jock, when I jump into it at night I disappear beneath it. I just sink right down out of sight, and when the thermometer begins to get in its fine work I lie there and swelter; and not a breath of relief could I find until luckily I bethought me of a rope ladder which I fasten to the headboard, and by which I climb out in the morning. And when I say 'morning' I don't mean the middle of the forenoon either, that time when certain effete and overworked freshmen appear for breakfast, but I mean a morning 'what is a morning.' Half-past five is the orthodox time for rising in Ethan's household, and six o'clock is a luxury to be had only on a rare Sunday morning.

"I'm saving money, I am, for a fact. I save it because I can't do anything else with it. There is nothing to buy here, not a thing; and when I come back to college I

shall show you a bank account that will just startle you. It'll have two figures in it at least, and that's more than Spike ever had in all the days of the years of his earthly pilgrimage. I'm lonesome, Jock, though you might not expect it of one so young as I. I think that one of Bert's jokes even would almost make me laugh now, if I could only hear his musical voice. But I'm busy and fast accumulating a great pile of lucre, or so Ethan thinks, anyway. He's not exactly envious, but he cannot repress his wonder as to what is to become of me when the salary of eleven dollars and a half a week has rolled itself up like a snowball for almost three months. That reminds me, Jock; I am writing this letter with a purpose, likewise with a worn-out stub pen. Ethan took me sailing last Saturday and we went up to the Bay. You can't imagine how strange and forlorn it seemed to me to be there, and for you and Spike and Bert to be far away, yelling for Williams, rolling the Amherst nine over Weston Field (or so I hope). But my tear-bedimmed eyes were not able to shut out everything from sight, and when I saw a *house-boat*, my excitement was so intense that I restored my damp

handkerchief to my pocket, and gazed hard and long.

“Now, I have not forgotten what you wrote me in your latest letter, Joek, to make arrangements with Ethan for another camp this summer. By the way, I have employed all my spare time this spring in reading up on Frontenac, and he beats Cartier high and low. Possibly you may recall my irreverent friend's remarks as to Cartier, Canada, Champlain, and various other ‘C's.’ Well, I haven't had any encyclopædia here, so that no one need fear that I shall be confined in my historical addresses the coming summer, if it is decided to spend our vacation here as of yore. But Frontenac — ah, even now I am tempted to dwell upon the glories of his deeds, the recklessness of his daring, the shrewdness of his surmises, the tenacity of his tendencies, the success of his searches, the pondering of his path, the forts of his fortification, and something like a hundred or more other alliterative phrases which I shall safely reserve until I meet you all again.

“Now, the sight of the before-mentioned house-boat immediately suggested a new plan to me. The owner of the craft wants

to rent it for the summer, and though he has already received many offers for it (I have his own word as to that, and if he doesn't know, I don't believe any other person does), for the sake of the dignity which our party would impart to his noble vessel, he'll let it go to us for the consideration named below ; but he must have an answer by Friday of this week. And seriously, Jock, I think if we do want it, word will have to be given him by that time. Now, if this meets your approval, and incidentally that of your father and of the other fellows, I think it would be a great thing to get that house-boat. It would be a movable camp, you see. It doesn't leak, no panthers or hedgehogs could climb it and devour the inmates, it's well fitted out with those things that make life worth living, including beds and knives and forks, and there will also be a spoon for Bert, and if I receive word from you by Friday of this week I can secure it. My school closes on Friday of next week, and then I'll be free. Write me, but don't telegraph me, for that would scare Ethan ; and, besides, the message might not be delivered unless some one from the Corners happened to be over at the station, and as

that occurs only semi-occasionally, the issue would likely be in doubt for some years to come.

“You can’t understand how hungry I am to see you all again. And that Amherst game! Alas and alas! And yet again alas! And once more with a ‘tiger’! But Frontenac and a house-boat will do their utmost to console me until I can get word of the score.

“I trust this brief note will find you well. I found this poem the other day appended to a ‘composition’ on ‘Spring’ by one of my scholars: —

“‘My pen is poor, my ink is pale
My hand it shakes like a puppy dog’s tail.’

“‘Them’s my sentiments too,’ but I’ll try to write more next time.”

“Ah, that’s just like Bob,” murmured Bert, “always so terse and concise in every statement he makes. I say, Jock, what do you do when he writes you a ‘long’ letter? He calls this only a note.”

“I read it through from beginning to end. There never was a fellow like Bob,” replied Jock, his eyes becoming soft at the mention of his friend. “Bert, do you remember

that place in Horace we were reading the other day?"

"'We' were reading? I don't know that I was guilty of that. But just what place do you refer to?"

"Why, where he's writing of the departure of his friend, and calls him *dimidium mee vite*."

"No, I can't say that I do," replied Bert, shaking his head in mock solemnity. "Is that Latin, Jock?"

"It's all Greek to Bert, anyway," interrupted Ben.

"You tell what it means then, my learn friend," exclaimed Bert, turning quickly upon his room-mate.

"It means 'the half of my life,'" replied Ben, proudly.

For a moment Bert stared at his friend as if he did not really believe the evidence of his senses. "Who would have believed it? Who would have believed it?" he murmured. "Spike, yes, Spike, actually translating a Latin phrase! I would that the faculty were here. How it would encourage them. Their labor has not all been in vain."

"Keep still, Bert; can't you be sober for just a minute?" said Jock.

"What did that Latin have to do with Bob?" inquired Ben.

"Why, it seems to me that Bob is the half of my life. I don't believe you fellows appreciate him; but, then, he never roomed with either of you. He's the best fellow that ever lived! I've roomed with him two years now, one year in the prep school and one in college, and I tell you he's just as true as steel. I've never known him to do a mean thing or say a hard word of another fellow in college. He's the straightest, cleanest fellow I know, and generous! Why, I wish I could tell you some things I know!"

Jock's praise of his friend found a ready response, though each might have expressed, had he been so minded, the thought that, generous as Bob was, the generosity was not confined to him, for a better-hearted lad than Jock Cope neither of them knew. The four friends were bound together by those ties which can only be formed in youth; and happy is the man who can carry into the struggle and strife of the days of his manhood the love and affection formed in the earlier time, for the price of a true friend is above that of every earthly success.

Still Bert was not entirely willing to abandon his banter, and said, "If Bob was, or is, the half of your life, Jock, where do we come in?"

"A fellow can have a good many halves in his heart, can't he? Because he likes one more it doesn't mean that he likes the others less. But, say, fellows, what do you think of this plan of a house-boat?"

"I think it's great!" replied Bert, promptly.

"Same here," said Ben, with enthusiasm.

"Well, then, if you're agreed, I think I'll go down there to-night."

"To-night? To-night? And leave all the rest of Commencement week? You can't do that, Jock; and besides, you don't know what your father will have to say. He may veto the whole plan!" said Bert.

"He won't veto it," replied Jock, with a laugh. "He wants me to go down to the Thousand Islands again, it did me so much good last summer. That is, if you fellows will go along too."

"Your powers of persuasion are too strong for me to resist," said Bert; "I cannot refuse such an invitation when I knew that it will do you so much good. I must

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Jock laughed, as he said, "All right. I'll telegraph home that I'm going down the St. Lawrence, and my mother will come a little later, for she's going to spend the summer there. Then I'll write you fellows and you can come down next week."

"Where'll you put up at the Corners?" inquired Ben.

"Oh, Ethan will take me in, I'm sure. I'll chance it, anyway."

"Feather beds and fried cakes and all?"

"Yes, all."

On his way to luncheon Jock telegraphed to Albany for a section in the sleeping car, and that very afternoon, after packing his belongings and bidding his friends and classmates farewell, departed from Williamstown, hoping to surprise his friend Bob Darnell by his arrival on the following morning.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DRIVER.

It was almost nine o'clock on the following morning when Jock Cope, with his grip in his hand, alighted at the little station which was about five miles from his destination. An hour before this time he had secured his breakfast at a primitive eating-room at one of the numerous junctions of the railroad, and as he ate he had thought of Bob's description of the menu which Ethan's wife prepared for her boarder. So hungry had Jock been, however, that the excellence of the repast had soon absorbed all his thoughts and energy, and now, when he stepped upon the rude platform and looked about him for some means of conveyance by which he might be carried to the Corners, his air was that of a young gentleman thoroughly at peace with himself and with all the world.

The sight which now met his eyes was

as novel as his recent breakfast had been. The noisy train was already disappearing around the curve in the road, leaving behind it a cloud of heavy black smoke and cinders. Upon the platform were two or three men and boys, the former with their trousers tucked inside their heavy cowhide boots, and the freckle-faced youngsters were gazing at him with an interest and curiosity as keen as if he had been a being from another world, as indeed he was to these rustic beholders, who perhaps had never been outside the region in which they had been born.

As no one spoke to him, and apparently the only vehicle in sight was a heavy lumber wagon from which two men were unloading boxes of cheese, Jock decided that he must take the initiative; and, if there was no one to offer him a conveyance, he must find one for himself.

Accordingly he approached one of the boys and said, "Is there a hack here? Is there any one I can get to take me over to the Corners?"

"Hey?" replied the lad, staring at him with open-eyed wonder.

I want to get some one to take me over

to the Corners," repeated Jock. "How far is it over there? About five miles, isn't it?"

"I guess so," answered the boy, slowly, as if he did not fully comprehend the question.

"Is there any one here to take me over there?"

"I hain't seen nobody, no time, not this mornin'," replied the boy, throwing in as many negatives as possible, doubtless in order to increase the force of his words.

"But isn't there some one I can get? I'll pay him well."

"I don't know nobody."

"Don't they have a stage? How do they carry the mail?"

"Oh, yes, the's a stage; but it don't go yet."

"When does it go?"

"When the train comes from the north. Jim Haynes, he drives the stage; but he makes only two trips a day. He goes over in the mornin' and comes back at night."

"How long will it be before the train comes from the north?"

"I don't know; about two hour, I guess, if she's on time, which don't happen very

often. 'Most allus she's a hour or two late."

Jock looked at his watch helplessly. If the boy had spoken truly, it would be almost noontime before he would arrive at the Corners. However, the station agent having confirmed the statement of the lad, Jock decided to make the best of it, and so, entering the waiting-room, seated himself to wait for the arrival of the train from the north.

On the walls of the room were hanging two or three time-tables and placards, which with startling type urged the beholders to go West by the only route worthy of consideration. Jock wondered whether these invitations were genuine or not, for it did not seem as if any one from the region would ever go anywhere. In one corner, upon a rude bracket, was a pail of water, and a tin cup was attached to it by a small chain as if perhaps the cup itself by some strange and unaccountable freak might suddenly break away from its surroundings and unexpectedly decide to accept the afore-said invitation and go West by the best route in America. The benches creaked and groaned whenever he stirred, and had

been so cut and carved by the knives of former occupants that they were as scarred as the veterans of many wars.

Jock soon discovered that the part of the native population which lingered in the vicinity appeared to be controlled by an unconquerable thirst, for at intervals of only a few minutes men and boys entered the room and slowly drank from the tin cup, glancing at him as they did so over the top of that useful utensil.

There was an almost uninterrupted clicking of the telegraph instrument in the ticket office, but the agent, who seemed to combine many offices and duties in one, apparently gave it slight heed, and went on with his report which was spread out on a table before him.

For a time the very novelty of the scene was sufficient of itself to interest Jock, but when an hour had elapsed and still there was no sign of the longed-for train from the north, he arose from his seat, and approaching the little window of the ticket office inquired, "Can you tell me when the train from the north is due?"

"It's due now, but its thirty-one minutes late."

“Will it make up any time before it arrives here?”

“No, 't isn't likely to.”

“Will the stage for the Corners wait for that train?”

“Yes. Be you goin' to the Corners?”

“Yes. Will I find the stage here at the station?”

“I guess ye will if ye look sharp. Leastwise its here now.”

“Here now? Where? I don't see it,” replied Jock, looking quickly about him.

“That's it right eout thar by that 'ere bitchin' post;” and as he spoke the agent pointed to a one-horse conveyance standing near the building. The horse appeared as if his days and nights had been spent in waiting, and that he did not much care if all his remaining days, which did not promise to be many if appearances were to be trusted, were to be passed in the same occupation. His head was hanging low, and even his ears partook of the dejected bearing and manner of their owner. One of the wheels of the rickety open wagon to which he was attached had been placed on the axle with the front side turned in, and

altogether a more forlorn combination Jock thought he never had seen.

However, he laughed good-naturedly, and, striving to possess his soul in patience, walked out of the room. The men were still unloading cheese, though, as he glanced again at them, he perceived that it was a fresh consignment which had come, and not the one which he had seen upon his arrival. The tow-headed boys, most of whom were barefooted, were "walking the track" or leaping across the rails; but though they displayed considerable energy in these occupations, they seldom spoke, and, when they did, it was in subdued tones, far different from the noisy urchins whom Jock was accustomed to see in the city streets. Altogether the scene impressed him as so novel and so unlike anything he had ever seen before, that his interest was aroused; and, almost before he was aware that the time was gone, he heard the shrill screech of the approaching locomotive, and, looking up, beheld the cloud of smoke and dust that marked the arrival of the longed-for "train from the north."

Instantly the attitude and action of all about the little station changed. The boys

ceased their athletic sports, and even the boxes of cheese for the moment did not absorb the attention of the toiling men. One ear of the patient stage-horse was pricked up as if he too realized that something out of the ordinary course of events was about to happen, and then Jock dimly began to perceive what the arrival of a train in a remote little hamlet meant to the inhabitants thereof. It was the one connecting link between them and that vast and dim world outside, a world unknown, but which after all must be, since occasionally some traveller comes from its distant regions. It was opera, concert, theatre, lecture all in one—the one break in the monotony of the life and the one convincing proof that the place was somehow connected with the rest of the world, and not cut off by itself, else that throbbing, puffing engine and its train of three cars would not make its daily stop.

Even Jock found himself deeply interested in the approaching train; and when for a brief time it halted before the station he watched the two passengers who alighted and the three who scrambled hastily on board as if they were fearful that

they would be left behind, with an interest such as he had seldom before felt. As soon as the cars resumed their journey, he hastened across the sandy road and climbed into the creaking "stage," which groaned almost as if it were human, and rebelled against anything being added to the load it was compelled to carry.

In a few minutes the man, who evidently was the driver, approached, and Jock found himself returning the half curious stare with which he was greeted. The man was a tall, ungainly specimen, with a beard of bright red which he had permitted to grow long upon his chin. His trousers, too, were tucked inside his boots, as if he was fearful lest some harm might come to them if they were left exposed; and the determined manner in which he held the whip in his right hand impressed his sole passenger that here at least was a man who would make good speed, and that they would arrive at the Corners in ample time for dinner. Alas for human hopes and the deceptive appearances of all mankind!

"Is this the stage for the Corners?" inquired Jock.

"I'm calc'latin' that's what it is," replied

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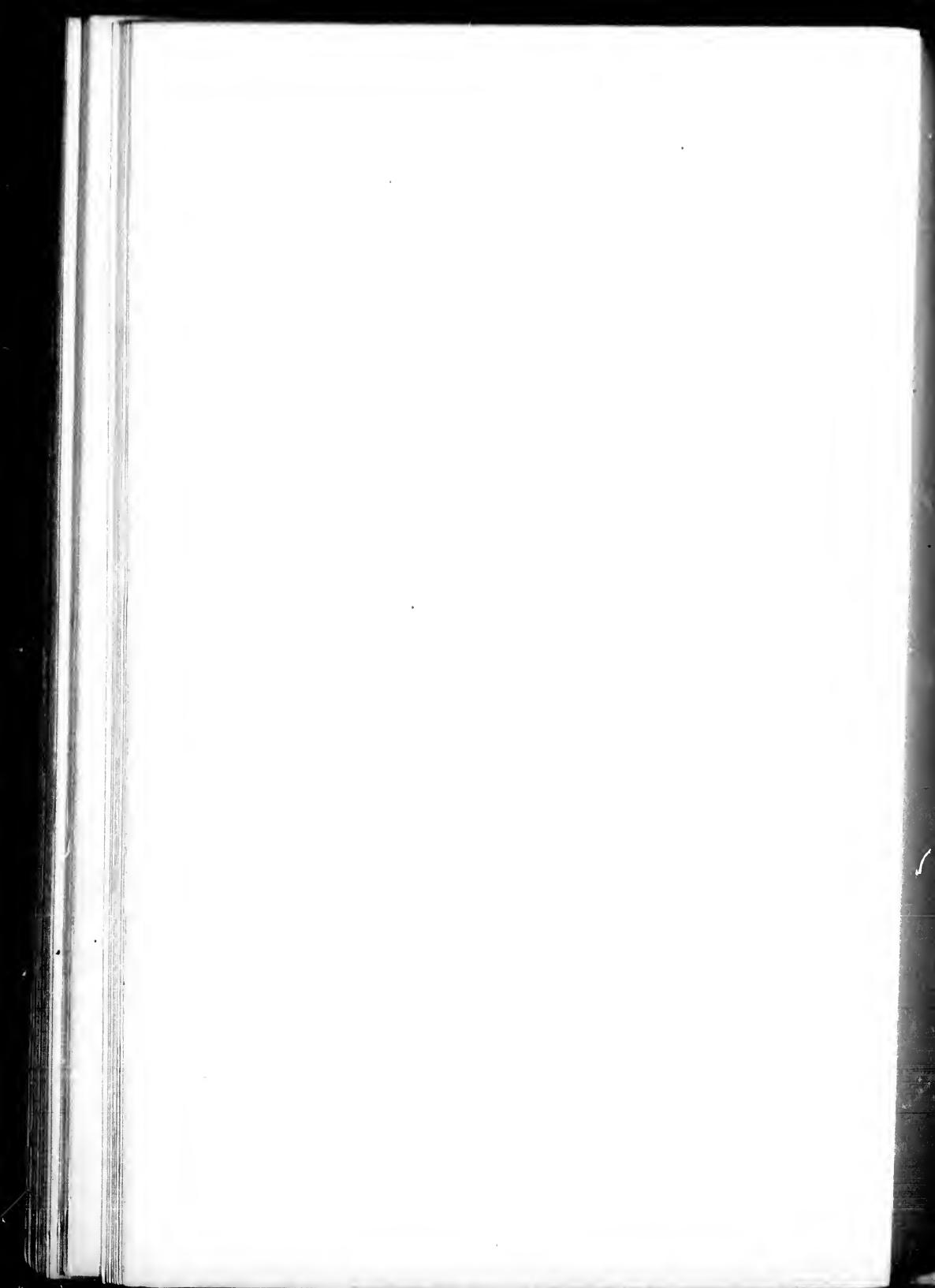
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"IS THIS THE STAGE FOR THE CORNERS?" Page 50.



the driver, whose curiosity as to his passenger was evidently keen, though somewhat suppressed.

When he grasped the reins and spoke to his horse in tones such as he might have used if he had been calling him from the farther side of an immense pasture, Jock grasped the sides of his rickety seat, half expecting to be thrown from the wagon by the burst of speed which would follow. To his surprise, however, the horse began to move slowly, and evidently was either accustomed to the loud tones of his driver, or was so engrossed in the thoughts of his far-away early days that the present had slight influence upon him. Jock's surprise was still further increased, when he discovered that before the real journey was begun they were to go up to the little post-office, where the mail was to be "overhauled," and the portion for the Corners was to be placed in a separate pouch.

He waited patiently for this process to be completed, seated meanwhile in the stage in front of the office, and curiously observing the people who slowly entered the building, waiting for their second daily excitement, — the distribution of the mail.

At last the driver came forth, swinging a pouch which in its size seemed sadly out of proportion to the small bundle of mail matter it contained, and, throwing it into the wagon, resumed his seat, and once more Jock thought they were to go on their way.

Again he was doomed to disappointment, for it speedily became evident that other errands were to be done before that eventful moment should arrive. Various purchases were to be made at the village stores; but even these at last were completed, and, after a full half-hour had elapsed, the driver once more resumed his seat, and in stentorian tones called upon his steed to "g'long" and "git up," and slowly the stage started on its journey to the Corners.

The curiosity of the driver at last could not be restrained, and, turning partly about in his seat and glancing keenly at Jock as he spoke, he said, "Mebbe ye're a drummer?"

"A drummer?" replied Jock, in surprise. "No, I never played a drum in my life."

"I don't mean ye play a drum, but mebbe ye're an agent for somethin' or other."

"No, I'm not an agent," said Jock, smilingly.

For a moment the driver was evidently foiled, but his curiosity would not down, and after a brief silence he said, "Goin' a visitin'?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, who be ye, and what ye goin' to the Corners for, anyway?"

"I'm going over there to see a friend."

"That's it! I knew it the minit I sot eyes on ye. I jest knew ye was either a drummer or was goin' a visitin'. Who might it be ye was a goin' to visit?"

"I'm going to see a friend of mine who is teaching school there now."

"Ho! Young Darnell? I know him. I know him like a book."

"I hope you don't know anything bad about him."

"Not a bit. Not a bit. I guess he knows books all right, and the boys dew say he's a 'tarnal good ball player tew. Yes, sir, he goes right eout with the boys after school and plays ball with 'em. They played a nine from Hoseaville last Sat'day and beat 'em high and dry tew. They say as how the teacher made six home runs in

that 'ere game. He's all right with the boys, I tell ye!"

"Six home runs! What was the score?"

"Forty-one to thirty-seven. Yes, sir, beat 'em high *an'* dry! First time in six year that the Corners has walloped Hoseaville, an' 'twas mostly the teacher's doings, too, what did it! 'Tisn't frequent a young fellow comes here like that. 'Most allus it's t'other way. The young fellows leave us."

As Jock remained silent, thinking of the marvellous score by which the superiority of the Corners over Hoseaville had been demonstrated and what pleasure the description of that game would give to Bert and Ben, the driver continued his talk, interrupting himself occasionally to shout at his horse and threaten him with dire punishment if his pace was not quickened.

"Yes, sir, 'most o' eour boys leave us. Now, there was Lish Tintle. Last year he went off to Klondike and come back rich, rich as mud. Heow much d'ye s'pose he had when he got here?"

"I don't know. How much had he?"

"A million dollars. Yes, sir, a mil-l-l-ion dollars in cold cash! Fust thing he did

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was ter buy the Weaver place fur his ma. Paid nine hundred and fifty dollars and fifty cents spot cash, right deown. Yes, sir, that's jest what he did! Then he went an' bought his sister, — she that's Sary Sloan now, lives right over by the school-house, — he bought her a pianny. Yes, sir, that's jest what he did. Paid a hundred an' tew dollars fur it cash, right down, sir, an' didn't seem to mind it no more'n you or I would mind payin' tew cents fur a postage stamp. An', sir, if ye'd b'lieve me, they do say as heow he's got a gov'ment bond! I ain't seen that myself, but I've seen them as has, an' the' say it's jest as trew as the gospel. What d'ye think o' that for the Corners?"

"I think it's great," replied Jock. "But isn't that the Corners we can see ahead of us?"

"That's what 'tis; g'lang there, Jehu! What's the matter ails ye this mornin'? I guess ye forget them oats I give ye last week! G'lang! G'lang!"

Perhaps the reference to the feast of former days inspired the steed with new zeal. At all events he, too, had spied the end of his journey, and with a quickened

pace started down the last long hill that led to the Corners, and a few minutes afterward halted before the post-office, where Jock, grip in hand, speedily alighted and was about to start toward the schoolhouse, which he could see in the distance, when the voice of the driver once more rudely recalled him to a duty he had neglected.

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CHAPTER V.

A WELCOME FROM ETHAN.

“HAVEN’T ye forgot somethin’?” called the driver, sharply.

“Forgotten something? Why, I didn’t know that I had,” replied Jock, as he turned back toward the stage. “Why, so I have,” he exclaimed, a moment afterward. “I forgot to give you my fare. How much is it?”

“Seein’ as it’s you, I’ll only charge ye four shillin’. It’s really wurth more’n that, but ‘Live, an’ let live,’ that’s my motto every day in the year.”

Jock failed to notice that the driver was shrewdly watching him as he spoke, and, in his eagerness to start at once for the school-house, he drew forth the coin and handed it to the man. Then, resuming his walk, he turned once more toward the temple of learning, and soon entered the adjoining yard.

As he glanced at his watch he saw that it was not yet one o'clock, and this fact accounted for the presence of the boys who were playing ball in the few minutes that yet remained before the assembling of the school. At the farther side of the yard he discovered the teacher himself joining in the game of his pupils, and Jock had come close to his side before his presence was discovered. For a moment Bob gazed blankly at him as if he mistrusted his own vision, then, dropping his bat, he eagerly seized the outstretched hand of his friend and wrung it till the tears almost started in Jock's eyes.

"Why, old man," he exclaimed, "where in the world did you come from? You're the last person I expected to see here. Did you drop from the clouds?"

"Hardly," Jock managed to ejaculate, as he freed his hand from the teacher's grasp. "I just this minute alighted from the stage. I left Williamstown yesterday afternoon."

"You did! How are the fellows? And say, Jock, what was the score in the Amherst game?"

"Seven to five."

"In whose favor?"

"Ours."

"You don't mean it! That's all right! And we really won, did we?"

"You'd have thought so if you had heard the crowd yell. Couldn't you hear it up here?"

"Hear it up here? You don't understand the situation, I fancy. If all the world was gathered together to give three cheers for Old Williams, the sound wouldn't get in here till the earth turned over and caught the echo. We didn't hear anything in this part of the country. Jock, have you had anything to eat?"

"Not since morning."

"I'll tell you, then, what you're to do. Go right down the street to that little wood-colored house yonder, the one with the great buttonwood tree in front. That's where Ethan lives, and if he's at home you won't need to ask for anything, for he never tires of singing your praises. If he isn't there, just tell Mrs. Ethan who you are, and she'll fix you out. I'd go myself with you, only it's time for me to begin school. You'll come right back, won't you, Jock, just as soon as you've had your dinner?"

"I will that."

“All right, then, I’ll expect you without fail in an hour or two.”

Bob entered the building, and in a moment returned with a large bell in his hand which he rang vigorously as he stood in the doorway. Instantly the boys and girls stopped their play and slowly began to file into the schoolhouse. Jock was an interested beholder of all that occurred, but, as his friend lingered for a moment and waved his hand at him, he concluded that the time for him to depart had come, and accordingly, with his grip still in his hand, started down the village street.

It all seemed so strange and unusual to him that he was gazing curiously about him as he passed on. The low houses, for the most part unpainted and weather-beaten, the garden attached to each place, the sombre barns, the few people to be seen, and the deep silence that rested over the hamlet made the life of the great city in which he had his home, and the shouts and cheers of the noisy college boys he had so recently left behind him, all seem unreal and like a dream.

In the distance were the blue waters of the mighty St. Lawrence, but not a vessel

of any kind could he discover. An air of eternal calm seemed to pervade all things. The summer skies, the distant woods, the rambling village street, were like the parts of some landscape on canvas, beautiful and suggestive, but without a sign of life or action. As he walked on, he noticed that he was passing over a plank sidewalk, and he almost laughed aloud as he recalled the play of "Hamlick" which had been given in the preceding summer to raise the necessary funds by which, doubtless, this very walk had been obtained.

His thoughts were recalled to his present existence by the discovery of some one seated on the low piazza which extended around two sides of Ethan's house, and a moment afterward he knew that the person was none other than Ethan himself. He was tipped back in his chair against the side of the house, and was smoking his pipe with an air of content that seemed to be a part of the peacefulness of the day itself. The very same hat which he had worn in the preceding summer was on his head, and he was coatless, as was his custom. Indeed, the only time Jock could recollect when he had seen the boatman

clad in that garment was at the immortal play of "Hamlick," but even then it had not seemed to belong in very truth to its wearer.

"How do you do, Ethan?" called Jock, after he had halted for a moment before the house, hoping that the boatman would look up and see him.

"How d' do?" responded Ethan, slowly, scarcely turning his head as he spoke. A moment later, however, after glancing at his visitor, he discovered who it was that had hailed him, and a sudden change came over him. The chair dropped quickly to the floor of the piazza, and Ethan leaped up to greet his visitor.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "If it isn't little Jock! Where did ye come from?"

"I came from college here to see Bob, and you, and the St. Lawrence, and a few other persons and things. I trust you are glad to see me."

"Glad to see ye? Well I should say I be! I wouldn't be gladder if ye were Tom himself. Have ye heard from Tom lately?"

"Yes, father writes me that Tom is doing great work, and that he is going to promote him."

"Ye don't say so! Well, that's right, that's right. Come right in. Ma will be jest as tickled to see ye as I be. Ma! ma!" he shouted in stentorian tones. "Come out here! I've got something to show ye."

Thus bidden, Mistress Ethan speedily appeared, wiping her hands on her apron and evidently somewhat startled by the unexpectedly vigorous hail of her husband. Her matronly form and kind and benignant face were the very personification of goodness, and as soon as he had seen her Jock had no difficulty in understanding the warm praise which Bob had bestowed upon her.

"Here's Jock Cope, young Jock, I mean," exclaimed Ethan as the partner of his joys appeared; and the warm and motherly greeting she bestowed upon her visitor at once made "young Jock" sure of his welcome.

There were many questions to be answered, chief among which was Tom's well-being and success, and when at last their desires in this respect had been satisfied, Ethan suddenly exclaimed, "Have ye had any dinner, Jock?"

"No, I haven't," replied Jock, "and I'm ready for some too."

“Sit right down and ma’ll a’tend to yer wants afore ye know it.”

“I’d rather have a bowl of bread and milk than anything else.”

“Sho! That’ll never do. Ma’ll get ye up something hot.”

But Jock was persistent, and so was soon seated before the table upon which his hostess had placed a bowl of bread and milk, a plate of “fried cakes” and an ample pie. Ethan was too interested an observer to leave his young friend, and accompanied him into the kitchen when the feast was spread.

“I hope Tom’s careful o’ his money,” he suggested.

“I don’t believe he’s likely to become extravagant on his present salary,” replied Jock, smilingly.

“I don’t know ’bout that. When a young fellow like Tom gets nine dollars a week, it’s a temptation to him. An’ then the city’s a dredful place, I’m told. Full o’ pickpockets and thieves and all sorts o’ burglarous folks.”

“I’m not a bit afraid of Tom,” said his mother, stoutly. “Tom was always a good boy, an’ I don’t b’lieve he’ll be gettin’ into

trouble deown to New York a bit more'n he would here at the Corners. There's wickedness enough an' to spare 'most everywhere, I'm thinkin'."

"Jest hear ma talk," exclaimed Ethan, his eyes glistening. "She's as proud o' Tom as if he was made o' gold."

"I'm not a bit prouder'n pa is," said Tom's mother, smilingly.

"I think Tom's a fellow of whom any one might be proud," said Jock, who had been strongly moved by the manifest affection in the home. After all, it seemed to matter little whether it was in the great city or in the humbler abodes of the remote regions, the love of father and mother was much the same. And what a wealth it was too! Happy the lad who knew, no matter how the world might feel toward him, or how hard the experiences of life might be, that there was always one spot on earth from which prayers and love rose for him like incense from an altar, and to which he could turn, sure of a welcome and an affection never to be lost. He thought of those who were following him with a love and interest as keen as that manifested in this humble home in the Corners, and somehow

his eyes were moist and his heart was warm at the recollection.

"Can you put me up here for a day or two, Ethan?" he inquired.

"Put ye up? Well, I should say we could," remarked Ethan, warmly.

"You can let me room with Bob."

"Course."

"The driver told me that Bob was doing well in his school."

"Well?" I rather guess so! There hasn't been such a teacher here in years as this Bob o' yours. I'd hardly have thunk it from what I see o' him last summer, but he's done wonders, Bob has. Lots o' our teachers is put out 'cause they haven't no discipline; but Bob somehow manages to keep the scholars so interested he doesn't seem to have no trouble, not a bit. He hasn't licked one o' the scholars, has he, ma? Not even the Bamford boys, what have been the terror o' every teacher here."

"No, he hasn't had any trouble," replied Ethan's wife, kindly. "They all seem to like him very much."

"If ye don't think ye'll eat the whole o' that pie, I might help ye out a bit, jest to be polite," suggested Ethan, gazing fondly at the table as he spoke.

"Pa, you had three pieces at dinner," suggested his wife, reprovingly.

"Can't help that, Hannah, when it's *your* pie I jest have to. If 'twas somebody else's, 'twould be a different thing."

"How much do ye want, pa?" she inquired, smiling at Ethan's compliment, and taking a knife in her hand.

"Oh, jes. a bite, jest a bite."

The worthy woman cut the pie in halves, and, taking one half in his hands, Ethan tipped back his chair and proceeded to "punish" his piece, as he termed it, but without interrupting his conversation with Jock.

"Ye come over on the stage, did ye?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"How much did Sam Morey tax ye?"

"Fifty cents."

"Four shillin'? Four shillin'?" exclaimed Ethan, aghast, bringing his chair down to the floor with a bang and even pausing for a moment in his consternation in the pleasing occupation in which he was engaged. "The rascal! He never charges more'n two shillin', and he's jest done the highway robbery on ye! I'll see Sam Morey myself this very day about that."

"Oh, let him go. I had the worth of my money. He told me that Bob played on you ball nine against Hoseaville."

"He told ye about that, did he?" said Ethan, instantly mollified. "Them Hoseaville fellows was the most stuck-up chaps ye ever see, an' the way the wind was took out o' their sails was a caution. An' Bob done it! He done it, 'most alone too!" Ethan's excitement over the chastisement the Corners had inflicted upon the proud foe from Hoseaville was keen; but in a moment his tone changed as he inquired, "What ye deown here for now, anyway, Jock?"

"I came down to see about the house-boat Bob wrote me of."

"Ye don't say so! Well, the' is one up to the Bay."

"So Bob wrote. I'm going there to-morrow to see about it, and if I get it, we'll surely want you to go with us this summer, Ethan."

"I'm yer man."

"I'll go over to the school now," said Jock, as he rose from the table, and a few minutes afterward he was standing before the door of the schoolhouse, waiting for his knock to be answered.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOL.

THE door of the schoolhouse was slightly ajar, and Jock could hear the voice of the teacher above the low hum of the scholars within. It seemed so strange to think of Bob Darnell as presiding over the room that for a moment Jock smiled as he thought of what Bert and Ben would say if they were where he was.

His meditations were interrupted by a tow-headed urchin, who opened the door and gazed blankly at the visitor for a moment without speaking.

"I want to see Mr. Darnell," said Jock, kindly. "He is here, isn't he?"

The lad made no reply, but, leaving the door open, turned quickly about, and, calling across the room, said, "Teacher, there's a boy here as wants to see you."

"A boy." Jock felt his cheeks flush at the word. That was a fine salutation for

one who had successfully passed into the sophomore class in college, and his feeling of confusion was in no wise relieved when Bob himself approached the door and with twinkling eyes bade Jock enter.

Jock followed his friend across the room and, taking the proffered chair, seated himself on the platform in response to Bob's invitation. He could feel as well as see that he was the centre of interest of all the pupils. The recollection of the term the lad had applied to him had not yet passed, and, despite his effort to appear at ease, he was strangely conscious of himself.

As he glanced curiously about the school-room, for Bob had now resumed his labors with a class in arithmetic, he soon found himself deeply interested in the sight before him. Curious glances were still cast at him, but for the most part the scholars had resumed their labors.

It was a strange collection of faces and forms before him. Most of the scholars were under fourteen years of age. Some of them were bareheaded, and others were clad in garments which evidently had descended from ancestors more or less remote. There was, however, a keenness

displayed by many of those who were present that betokened the possession of minds of no little acuteness. As Bob had said, there were also some who were larger and older than he, but almost without an exception they were working hard over their tasks, and, if appearances were to be trusted, their mental acumen was much less than that of some of the mischievous urchins and smiling girls.

The latter were evidently greatly pleased about something, and frequently looked up from behind their large geography books at one another, and then dropped their eyes with a half-suppressed giggle. Somehow Jock had the feeling that he was the source of their amusement, and, though he was unable to understand it, the knowledge did not increase his feeling of ease.

The arithmetic class had now completed its labors, and as they returned to their seats Bob turned to Jock in the brief intermission. "It's great work here, Jock," he said; "I've learned more than I did in freshman year in college."

"Some of these boys look as if they could teach some things not written up in the books," suggested Jock.

“So they can. I think the country boys are much more self-reliant than boys in the city are. I don’t know that they are as quick-witted or keen, but they’re not slow. For example, there’s that little fellow over on the left — the one with the black eyes. He is trying to pass a note and is watching me now. Bring me that note, John,” said Bob, in a tone slightly louder, addressing the lad of whom he had just been speaking.

For a moment the boy hesitated, and then his black eyes snapped as he boldly advanced and handed the forbidden missive to the teacher. As Bob received it he smiled, and a moment afterward said in a low voice to Jock, “The rascal’s been drawing a picture of you. Do you want to see how you appear to others?”

“Yes, let me see it.”

Jock quietly took the paper and saw on it a drawing which was supposed to represent himself, and underneath it were the words, “The teacher’s dude.”

As he glanced up he saw that the black eyes of the artist were fixed intently upon him, but he instantly dropped his face behind the large geography which he was holding upright on his desk before him.

“Who’s that big fellow in the back seat?” inquired Jock.

“That’s Ethan’s nephew. He’s as faithful as Crusoe’s man Friday, but he’s very slow-witted. I have to protect him from that little imp who just made that drawing of you. I don’t know whether Johnnie will become a saint or a sinner, but he’ll be one or the other. There’ll be no half-way with him.”

It was now time for the reading class — “the Fourth Reader” — to be called, and in response to a tap on the bell the class, consisting of some twelve or more, advanced to the benches in the front of the room. In this class were some of the elder and some of the younger pupils, and the black-eyed lad and the huge nephew of Ethan were seated side by side, presenting a contrast that was almost ludicrous.

“They’re almost like Bert and Ben — ‘the long and the short of it,’” suggested Jock, in a whisper.

Bob smiled, but made no other reply as he took his book and rose in front of the class. “Before we begin,” he said, addressing the scholars before him, “it will be well for us to understand a little of what this

lesson is. John, will you give us the outline?"

"It's about an old vulture talking to her children," said John, glibly. "She tells 'em they're old enough to shift for themselves, and she doesn't intend to scratch around for them any more."

A titter ran through the class when John abruptly resumed his seat; but Bob by a word promptly suppressed it, and said: "John has given us the substance, though perhaps he might have been a little more choice in his language. However, if he has done the best he knows how, we'll proceed with the lesson. Samuel," he said, addressing the huge fellow who was Ethan's nephew, "you may read the first paragraph. Bear in mind, please, that John has just said that the lesson represents a mother vulture as talking to her young ones, and telling them what they now can do and what she rightly expects of them."

Samuel drew his great frame slowly upward, but the trembling of the hand in which he was holding his book betrayed his excitement and alarm. However, he began to read in a loud and monotonous tone of voice, halting after every word and

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evidently "fearful," as Jock afterward described the scene, "that every word would be his next."

"You — you — know — how — how — to sight the — the — rabbit in the bush. You — you — know how to — to — catch — the — the barnyard fowl. You — you — you — know — know — how — to — to — fix your — your — tail on —"

"What!" interrupted Bob, sharply.

"That's what the book says," protested Samuel, sturdily.

A suppressed laugh broke from the class, and Jock, who was following the lesson with a book in his hand, was doing his utmost to stifle the delight he felt over the rendering the pupil had made.

Bob, however, was very sober, and without a smile on his countenance he turned to Samuel, who evidently was aware that something was wrong, though he did not just know what it was, and said, "Samuel, I wish you would spell and pronounce the syllables of that last word you read."

Thus bidden, the huge Samuel took his forefinger and, placing it on the page beneath the disputed word, said slowly, "t-a-l tail, o-n on — tail on."

The delight of the class could no longer be suppressed, even Jock giving way and laughing with the others, though he was heartily ashamed of himself for his lack of self-control.

"John, will you spell and pronounce that word for Samuel?" said Bob, soberly, he being the only one to retain his dignity.

John rose quickly and with a glibness born of overpowering confidence in himself said, "t-a-l tal, o-n-s ons, talons. The old vulture is telling her young ones that now they know not only how to sight the barnyard fowl, but also how to fix their talons."

"That's correct. Do you see it now, Samuel?"

"I don' know but I do," responded Samuel, gloomily.

"They didn't have to fix their tails on; they grew fast," suggested John. "'Twas their *talons* they had to fix, not their tails."

"That will do, John!" said Bob, somewhat sternly. "Now, Samuel, try it once more."

So Samuel tried again in tones which might have been heard in Ethan's home had that worthy boatman stopped to listen,

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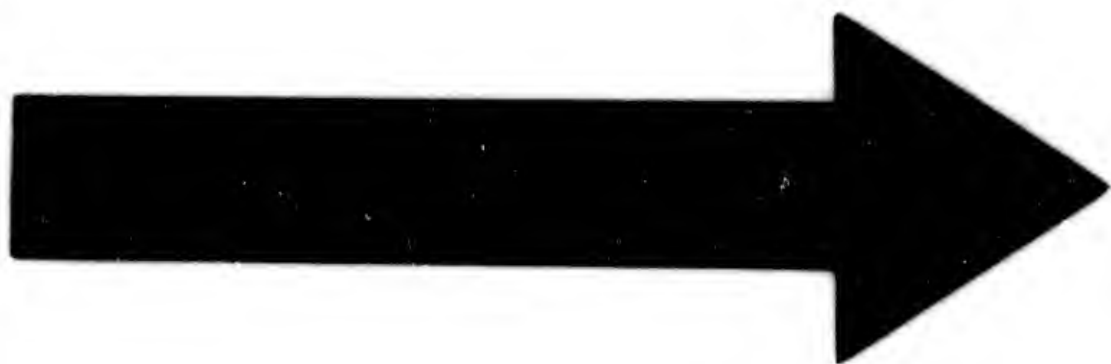
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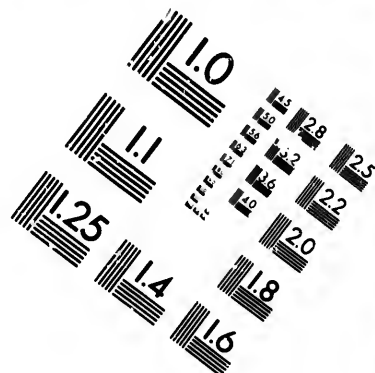
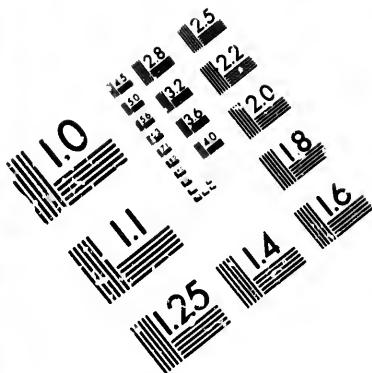
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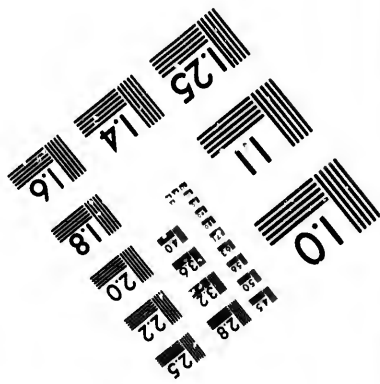
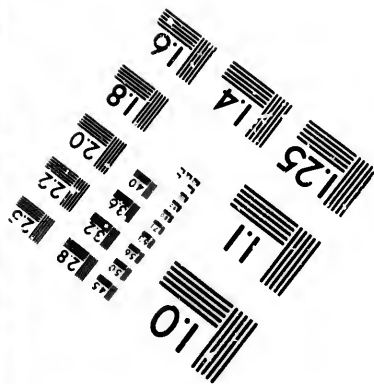
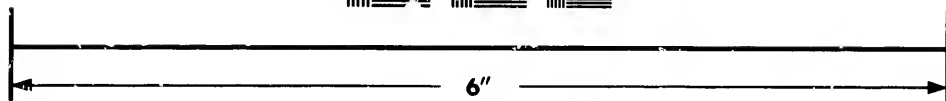
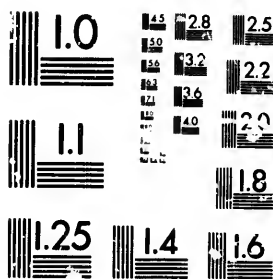
and this time he came safely through to the end. All the different members of the "Fourth Reader class" were called upon, and though some read after the halting, disconnected manner employed by Samuel, others read exceedingly well, and then at the close the teacher had them read the entire lesson in unison for the encouragement of the more backward pupils.

When the class resumed their seats, Bob said to Jock: "This school is the strangest mix-up you ever saw. In the winter they have two departments, but when the spring work on the farms begins, the school is smaller and they put them all together in this one room. As a consequence my classes are very uneven, and I have in every class some of the brightest pupils and some of the dullest you ever heard of. I feel sorry for the dull ones, and try to help them especially. Do you see that big girl in that seat over by the window? the girl with the long braid down her back? Well, I've been here almost three months, and I don't believe I've succeeded yet in getting one single idea into her head. And yet she studies, or thinks she does, and tries harder than any other scholar in the room.





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I tell you about her, for I want to prepare you for what is likely to happen in the next class."

The next class proved to be the big geography class, and some twenty or more of the pupils came forward to the benches in response to the call of the teacher. Once more John and Samuel were seated side by side, and there also was the large girl, Clara Loaker, of whom Bob had just been speaking to Jock.

The lesson proved to be upon Kentucky, and Bob had made very careful preparation for his class. He told them stories of Boone and the hardihood of the early settlers. He briefly sketched the history of the state, and related incidents of its public and prominent men. Then he showed them pictures of the famous Mammoth Cave, and read descriptions which many visitors to the underground wonder had given of the sights they had seen and experiences they had had. The class was deeply interested, and even Jock himself was no less interested than were the scholars. In some of Bob's graphic words he was reminded of the descriptions his room-mate had given in the preceding summer of the

voyages of Cartier up the St. Lawrence, and so he was in no wise surprised at the interesting narrative he made of the wonders of the Mammoth Cave. Bob now told the class to close their books, and then called upon "Miss Clara" to rise and recite.

"Now, Miss Clara," he said encouragingly, "I've been reading to you some of the stories of the famous state we have for our lesson to-day. And what is that state?"

His pupil gazed blankly at him, and made no response. Instantly a dozen or more hands were waved in the air in token of the knowledge their owners possessed, and were willing to give for the benefit of their benighted classmate. John's arm was the most vigorous of all, and in his zeal the lad partly rose from his seat and bent forward, as if such knowledge was too wonderful for him to hold longer.

"Well, John, what is it?" inquired Bob.

"Kentucky," shouted John, in his shrillest tones, and then immediately subsided into his seat with the consciousness of duty well performed manifest in his every feature.

"That's right. It's Kentucky. You recollect now, Miss Clara?"

"Oh, yes," responded the girl; "it's Kentucky."

"And do you recall the name of that place under the ground there? The one I've just been showing you pictures of and telling you about?"

"You mean *right* under the ground? straight down?" inquired Clara.

"Yes, right under the ground," replied Bob.

"Why, of course I know what that is. The place right straight down under the ground — is — ah — is — ah — It's *China!*" she added, in a burst of inspiration and confidence.

A titter ran through the class, and Jock looked quickly out of the window to avoid the possibility of displaying the emotion he felt at the moment. Poor Clara was overwhelmed with chagrin, and not even "the teacher's" kind words afforded much relief. As she resumed her seat her handkerchief was drawn from her pocket, and throughout the remainder of the recitation her face was buried from the sight of her more enlightened but somewhat merciless classmates.

John, however, was in high spirits, and whenever there was a break in the recita-

tion he was as ready as he was eager to express the information he possessed. The most of the class were also well prepared, and when the recitation ended Jock was honestly surprised and pleased at the work which evidently was being done in the unpretentious schoolhouse.

Bob, too, was a surprise to him, for although he thought he knew his room-mate well, the interest he had created and the response he had aroused from the school were far beyond anything even the enthusiastic Jock had believed possible to expect from this wonderful friend.

To Jock, the entire afternoon was a source of delight. It was his first experience in a country school, and the novelty of itself was sufficient to absorb his attention. He marvelled at the brightness of some of the pupils, and wondered at the infinite patience of Bob with the duller ones. But then Bob could do almost anything he tried to, he thought, and his affection for and pride in his friend were never greater than on that day. When the session at last was ended, and the two boys started toward Ethan's home, Jock was enthusiastic in his praises.

"Now about that house-boat, Jock," said Bob, as they turned in at the gate of the boatman's place.

"Well, what about it?" responded Jock.

"When are you going to see it?"

"To-morrow, if Ethan will take me to the Bay."

"He'll take you. You need have no fears as to that. He's not over busy and is always glad of a pretext to go out on the river."

"Then I'll go up in the morning and come back in the afternoon, but I think I'll go back home to-morrow night. You say your school closes next week?"

"Yes."

"All right, then. I'll not wait for my mother to come and meet me here, but I'll go back and perhaps she'll be ready to come with us. I thought at first I'd stay right here and wait for her, but I'm afraid I'd bother you; and besides I may want to get some things for use in the house-boat."

"You speak as if you feel certain you'd like it."

"I've no doubt I shall. To-morrow will tell the story, anyway," he added, as they entered the house.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATIONS.

THE delight of Ethan and his worthy companion in life was great over the presence of the two boys in their home. In spite of the boatman's apparent disdain for "city folks" and their ways, he nevertheless felt a pride in his visitors, for although Bob had made his home with them since his appointment as teacher in the Corners, and regularly every week paid his three dollars as equivalent for value received, he too was looked upon chiefly in the light of a visitor.

After supper — and Jock declared that such a supper he never before had eaten — all three went out on the low piazza, and Ethan, having removed his shoes and sitting back in his chair with his feet clad in "yarn" socks which the faithful mistress of the home had knit with her own needles, lighted his pipe and gazed contentedly about

him. The silent waters of the rushing St. Lawrence could be seen in the distance, occasionally reflecting the dim light like a faint streak of silver. The tree-toads and frogs were joining in their nightly chorus and thereby intensifying the very silence of the evening. All things united in proclaiming the peacefulness of the little hamlet, and to Jock it did not seem possible that far away in the great city there were noisy crowds and shouting newsboys and vast processions of people forever moving on and yet never apparently arriving at any destination. Here at least the friction and strife of life were not to be found, and even the occasional vehicle which passed, Ethan never failing to shout forth a salutation for every passer-by, moved quietly on as if time was no object and haste was unknown.

To Jock in particular the calm summer evening was delightful. He had worked hard through the college year, and had fairly earned a resting time. Then there was Bob by his side, and as he glanced at his friend the deep strong love he felt was manifest in the very expression of his face. Ethan was as quaint and original as ever, and as he appeared to be in a mood for

conversation Jock well knew that he would hear many expressions which he would enjoy and remember.

To add to his pleasure, Mistress Ethan, having "done up the supper dishes," soon joined them upon the piazza, seating herself in a low rocking-chair and busily knitting a sock for her husband; for, like most of the worthy matrons of the region, she could knit as well in the dusk as in the daylight, and Ethan even declared she could go on with her occupation when she was asleep, and it would make no difference in the growth of her work.

"I'm thinkin'," remarked Ethan, "that ye'll have to have two men to run that 'ere house-boat, that is if ye decide to hire it."

"Of course," replied Jock. "I only wish that Tom could be the second man, but I understand he is to have only two weeks' vacation. But we'll have him with us when he comes home."

"Yes," said Ethan, slowly, "Tom is to have two weeks off, but yer pa says his pay is to go right on jest the same."

"Yes," said Jock, simply.

"That's good o' him, but then I knew yer pa when he was only a boy younger'n

you be, an' he was always straight as a string, though I never thought he'd 'mount to very much. He was a powerful good speller, though, and many's the time I've seen him spell the whole school down and he such a little chap he didn't look bigger'n a minit. Mebbe Tom'll be quite a successful fellow yet. He's got a good start, for twelve shillin' a day don't grow on every bush. He ought to save a good lump out o' that, an' he would too, only they charge sech a ridic'lous price for his board. How much is it he pays, ma?" he inquired of his wife.

"Six dollars a week, pa," she replied.

"Perfectly scand'lous!" growled Ethan. "Then he has to pay car-fare and washin' and et cetera, and o' course it doesn't leave sech a 'tarnal sight behind. Still, if Tom's keerful, he'll lay up somethin'."

"Ethan, have you thought of any one to go with you on the house-boat?" inquired Jock.

"Yes, I have," replied Ethan, deliberately. "I've thought a heap about it, an' takin' all in all, I've 'bout come to the conclusion that Jed Bates is the best man, though that may not be sayin' very much, for good men is

'most as skurse as hen's teeth. By the way, Jock Cope, hev ye found out yet jist heow many front teeth a ceow has on her upper jaw? I thought likely them professors o' yours would inform ye as to that particular thing."

"Yes, I've found out," laughed Jock.

"Well, how many be the'?"

"It won't take long to count them."

"So it won't. So it won't. Can you milk a cow, Jock?"

"I don't know; I never tried."

"Now, pa," remonstrated Mistress Ethan.

"He's going to tell his joke on me," said Bob, with a laugh.

"What's the joke? Tell us, Ethan," said Jock, eagerly.

"'Twan't much of a joke; but one night when I was rather late gettin' back from the river and ma here was gettin' anxious like as to how the ceow was a goin' to be milked, why Bob, to do the perlite thing, he up an' says, says he, 'I'll milk her myself.' Ma wasn't very cordial like in her response, for I suspect she was a bit suspicious that 'he'd bit off more n he could chew,' so to speak, but he was so insistin' that she finally giv' in, an' lo an' behold

ye, Bob takes the milk-pail an' the milkin' stool an' goes forth to do or die. Old Brindle jest kind o' looked at him when he come out there. She was a bit lonesome prob'ly, for I'd jest took her calf away a few days afore. But she didn't offer no protest, an' Bob started in. I'd jest come up then an' was standin' out by the fence watchin' the performance. When I see him set down on the left o' the old ceow, I 'most called out to him, for I suspected likely there'd be trouble, an' sure enough the' was. He'd jest started in an' was gettin' on famously, so he called out to ma, 'See me milk! this is where the benefit o' college trainin' comes in, for the man with a *disciplined* mind can do 'most anything.' Jest then old Brindle lifted her foot, and Bob and the milk-pail was on the ground all mixed up, only the pail *an'* the milk was on top. I was a watchin' the performance all the time, an' I thought it 'bout time for my part to come in; but jest then I see Bob jump up, and, though he was covered with milk, he wanted to go right on, an' so I thought I'd wait a spell longer before I volunteered my services. This time he got on the right side o' the ceow, and for a while I didn't

see an' thing go wrong. I s'pect, though, that old Brindle got discouraged after a while, for when Bob had been a milkin' an' a milkin' an' no end was in sight, the old ceow at last kind o' heaved a sigh or two as if she'd made up her mind as heow this was a weary world o' woe an' 'twan't any kind o' use to continue her sufferin' patience any longer, an' the very first thing ye know she giv' a groan or two and jest give up an' laid down then an' there."

"Was Bob underneath?" inquired Jock, laughing heartily at Ethan's words.

"No. He managed to stand from under this time an' saved his pail o' milk besides. When I came up old Brindle seemed all right enough, but I've a suspicion she was disappointed in Bob."

"That's Ethan's story," said Bob. "It grows every time he tells it now, somewhat after the fashion of those fish stories of his he told us last summer, I fancy. But then, if he enjoys it, I've no objection."

"I think it's too bad for pa to tell that story," interrupted Ethan's wife. "Bob was doing as well as he knew how. I'm sure there's some things he can do better than you, Ethan."

“’Tisn’t to be supposed a boy no older’n he should know everything,” replied Ethan, complacently. “He’s got lots o’ time before him.”

“I suppose that must be so, Ethan,” said Bob, soberly. “It isn’t fair to expect as much of a boy of eighteen as it is of a man of seventy.”

“What’s that? What’s that ye’re sayin’?” demanded Ethan, sharply, bringing his chair abruptly down upon the floor of the piazza and holding his pipe in his hand as he glanced sharply at Bob.

“Oh, nothing,” said Bob, calmly, “only I think your wife is correct when she said I did my best, and a man seventy years old ought to have learned more than a boy only eighteen years old.”

“Who said I was seventy year old?” demanded Ethan, sternly.

“I’m sure I didn’t,” said Bob, soberly.

“But ye implied it, Bob. Ye did in yer manner, anyhow. Neow I ain’t anywhere near seventy year old. Not anywhere near, and everybody what sees me always says, ‘Why, Ethan, heow young ye be! Ye don’t grow old a mite.’ Don’t the’, ma?” he added, appealing for confirmation to his wife.

But Mistress Ethan was knitting busily, perhaps too busily to hear or heed her husband's words.

"Whew! It's a warm night," suggested Jock, who had been highly amused at the manner in which Bob had found the weak spot in Ethan's armor and had mercilessly thrust it through. Jock could see, too, that Bob was keenly sensitive to the ridiculous aspect in which Ethan's story had made him appear, and perhaps the knowledge that now he held something over the head of his room-mate may not have decreased his own sense of satisfaction.

"Yes, 'tis a warm night," asserted Ethan. "It's gettin' late, too. 'Most bedtime, boys."

"Why, what time is it?" inquired Jock, in surprise.

"'Most half-past eight."

Jock felt the touch of Bob's hand on his arm and checked the laugh that rose to his lips. A few minutes afterward Ethan and his worthy helpmeet retired, and for three hours the two boys remained on the low piazza talking over their plans and projects. It was sheer delight for Jock to be with his friend once more, and as he related the story

of the college games, and told of the experiences in the spring term, he found an inspiring listener in the "teacher" of the Corners. Bob, too, had his own stories to tell, and the novel scenes in his schoolroom and the quaint views of life which the people of the little hamlet held were all interesting to the city-bred lad by his side.

At last they sought the room above and prepared to retire for the night. The air was sultry, and Bob declared that he had not experienced such heat in all his career in the Corners. When the boys crawled into the bed Jock uttered an exclamation of dismay when he discovered that he was to sleep upon feathers which almost buried him from sight and started the perspiration from every pore in his body.

"I say, Bob," he exclaimed at last, "I can't stand this."

"You'll have to," murmured Bob, who was almost asleep.

"Why will I have to?"

"Because this is Mrs. Ethan's special pet. This bed has 'live' geese feathers in it, which she saw her own mother pluck from the birds. To her it is an honor to be duly appreciated to be permitted to sleep

on this bed. I've sometimes thought I'd ask her if she'd mind if I went down and crawled into the oven or slept on top of the kitchen stove just to cool off, but I've never dared to. I think she'd be mortally offended, and she's been too good to me for me to think of hurting her feelings. You can't understand what 'live geese feathers' are to the proud matrons of the Corners."

"Well, I can understand what they are to me," said Jock, as he climbed out of the bed, and, spreading a quilt upon the floor, prepared to pass the night there.

Somehow the dawn at last came, though to Jock the darkness seemed to be well-nigh endless; and after breakfast Bob departed for his school, and Jock and Ethan sailed away for Alexandria Bay, to inspect the house-boat.

It was late in the afternoon when they returned to the Corners, and Bob, who was waiting for them at the dock, had no difficulty in perceiving that his friend was enthusiastic over the results of his investigations.

"How is it, Jock?" he inquired, as that young gentleman leaped ashore.

"Great!"

“Then you were not disappointed?”

“Disappointed? Well, I should say not! It’s simply perfect, and if we don’t have a great summer, it’ll be our own fault, not that of the house-boat.”

That same evening Jock departed for New York, and one week afterward all four of the boys were at Alexandria Bay, prepared to enter upon their first experience in living on board a house-boat on the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STARTING OF THE HOUSE-BOAT.

It was a perfect summer day when our four friends met at Alexandria Bay. It was late in June, and the "season" on the St. Lawrence had not yet fairly begun; but as the boys stood together on the dock and looked out over the rushing river, already they could see many signs of the stirring days that were soon to come. Even at this early date beautiful yachts were speeding away in the distance, the fishermen were grouped together near the dock waiting for the coming of their own particular prey,—for many of them were as successful as fishers of men as they were of the savage bass,—cottages were opened, and over all was the warm June sunlight, which seemed to impart something of its own warmth and light and life to the inspiring scene.

As soon as the greetings had been given,

which one may be sure were thoroughly characteristic of the joy of four students who had successfully left behind them all the woes and experiences peculiar to freshman year in college (Bob himself having, by great exertions, managed to cover the work which his classmates had done in his absence, and so was as confident of his sophomore honors as if the examinations had already been passed), they eagerly turned to view the house-boat which was to be their home for the two months to come.

At first sight it did not appear to be a very imposing affair. It practically was a small scow, on which a cabin of more than ordinary size had been constructed. Indeed, the "cabin" seemed to cover nearly all the deck, as but a few feet at either end were left exposed. Quickly Jock led the way, and, with his friends, in a few minutes was busily examining the interior of the boat. There were three apartments, two of which were designed to afford sleeping accommodations. These, though rude, — for they were only berths or bunks built into the sides of the rooms, — promised to be sufficiently comfortable, and as the boys in

their enthusiasm were not inclined to be critical, they were abundantly satisfied with their inspection. These "rooms" were connected, and both opened into the room in the rear, which was arranged to be kitchen and dining room in one. Closets and places in which their provisions were to be stored adjoined it, but the stove and table were all in the one room.

The house-boat was fast to the dock, and the labor of transferring their belongings to their new abode was at once begun. Hammocks, books, chairs, cameras, and trunks had been sent to Alexandria Bay in advance of the coming of the boys, and so were ready and waiting for them now. A light canoe, which was Ben's own special possession, was also there, and this was placed on the deck of the house-boat, standing, as its proud owner declared, "like a life-boat to be used in case of danger or peril." Rods and lines in abundance were also provided, and within an hour the house-boat was all in readiness for the expedition.

Ethan had been there to meet them and assist in the duties, and with him was a tall, thin man in middle life whom he introduced as Jed Bates, his companion and

helper for the summer. The first glimpse at Ethan's assistant had convinced the boys that he was as much of a character in his own way as was the worthy Ethan himself. His face and arms were bronzed from exposure to the wind and sun on the river. He had a quick, keen manner of glancing about him, but his expression was one that promised to be extremely serious, and caused the boys to fear that he might not be the most congenial of men to have with them for a summer outing. However, nearly all the boatmen had the same solemn manner, and the young explorers were soon to discover that Jed's face and manner belied their promise. His face was smoothly shaved, except for a mustache which seemed to have responded to the St. Lawrence winds as much as had his features, for it was almost colorless. It was, however, evident that the man was possessed of great physical strength, and as the selection of a "vice-president," as Bob called Ethan's assistant, had been left to the judgment of the boatman, they were all satisfied that he would prove to be an acquisition to their party.

"How does the old tub work, anyhow?" inquired Bert, when at last all their posses-

sions and the supplies which Ethan had been instructed to purchase had been stored on board. "It doesn't run by steam and there isn't a place for a sail. Does it just drift?"

"Prob'ly drifts up the rapids when it goes through them," remarked Jed, with a glance of contempt or amusement at the speaker.

"But how does it go?" continued Bert, who was not to be quieted by the superior knowledge of the assistant boatman.

"It works same as a canal-boat," said Jed, dryly. "Some has a team o' mules to work along the banks an' haul the scow along, an' some has boys an' men to haul it. I went down to Mad'son County once to pick hops, and I see lots o' canal-boats there. They say as how some college boys works their passage home by drivin' the mules."

"I can well believe that," said Bert, with a laugh. "I think I know of some fellows myself who would have just about that amount of money left in their pockets at the end of the year. But I'd really like to know how this affair is worked, anyway."

"We have a tug," explained Jock.

"A tug? Do you expect to keep a tug

with us all the time? If you do, I'm glad I'm the guest and not the host, for the secretary of the treasury would veto the appropriation necessary, I know he would."

"No, we shan't have a tug all the time," said Jock. "We'll have one to take us wherever we want to go, and then leave us till we want to move on. Ethan, where are we to go first?"

"I thought I'd have 'em haul us around into Eel Bay," replied Ethan; "we'll find a good cove somewhere there and stay for a few days, if not longer. Then if we don't like it we'll move on. We shan't be obliged to stay anywhere longer'n we want to. It's my 'pinion as heow 'bout three days will satisfy ye and ye'll be more'n willin' for the expedition to be abandoned, same as that Carter ye was tellin' about last summer left some o' his boats away deown by Montreal and was glad to sail back for France with the others."

"That reminds me," said Ben, soberly. "Here's Bob, who doubtless has been reading up for our special benefit on some line connected with our trip. What is it to be this summer, professor?"

"I've been reading up on Frontenac,

fellows," said Bob. "It's a great story, too. Do you know, I never realized how much there was that is interesting in the story of those old fellows who first came up this river. It reads almost like a dime novel."

"I have no conception of what you mean by that," replied Ben, soberly. "I never indulge in the pastime of reading such stuff."

"A dime novel is too high for Ben's pocket," said Bert. "He indulges in the 'penny dreadful.' That's nearer his mark."

"All the same the story of Frontenac and his men is a mighty interesting one, boys. At least it was to me."

"That's right, Bob," said Jock, cordially. "I haven't a doubt that we'll all enjoy it too. But how in the world did you manage to get time to read up on Frontenac when you had your school work to do, and then kept up with our class in your studies too? That beats me."

"Why, it was this way," explained Bob. "I had an hour every noon between the two sessions, you see. It took me about half an hour for my dinner, and the other half I spent in reading up on Frontenac. It's

wonderful how much one can do in a week or a month by keeping at it, even if he doesn't give more than a half-hour a day to his reading. Hello, what's this?" he suddenly added.

A little tugboat had just steamed alongside the dock, and, as Ethan hailed it, it became evident at once that this was the one which was to haul them to their first resting-place in Eel Bay.

In a few minutes the lines were cast off, and the house-boat was taken in tow, and so the first of their voyages was begun. A few men and boys on the dock watched the departure, perhaps wondering what pleasure the eager-hearted lads could find in such a craft. But our friends, at least, were not troubled by any misgivings, and their college cheer rang out over the water as the line tightened and the house-boat turned slowly and began to follow the puffing little tug out into the river.

The boys settled back into their chairs, which had been placed on deck, keenly enjoying the experience, and as Ethan then approached they expressed to him their delight in everything pertaining to the morning.

"I thought likely ye'd like it first off," replied Ethan, evidently pleased with their words of praise, "an' so I told the cap'n o' the tug (he's Tim Phelps, an' his gran'-mother's cousin was my father's second wife's sister, so we're a bit related, ye see) to take us on a good long trip afore we settled deown for the night."

"That's right, Ethan," said Jock, enthusiastically. "We can't have too much of this. Isn't this glorious, fellows?"

Indeed it was a sight to quicken the pulses of a less impulsive lad than Jock Cope. The glorious sun, the deep blue of the rushing waters over which they were passing, the many beautiful little islands near, upon many of which still more beautiful summer homes had been erected, the tree-lined shores in the distance, the soft breath of the June day, and more than all, the abounding spirits and strong love of the four boys for one another — all combined to increase the mere joy of living.

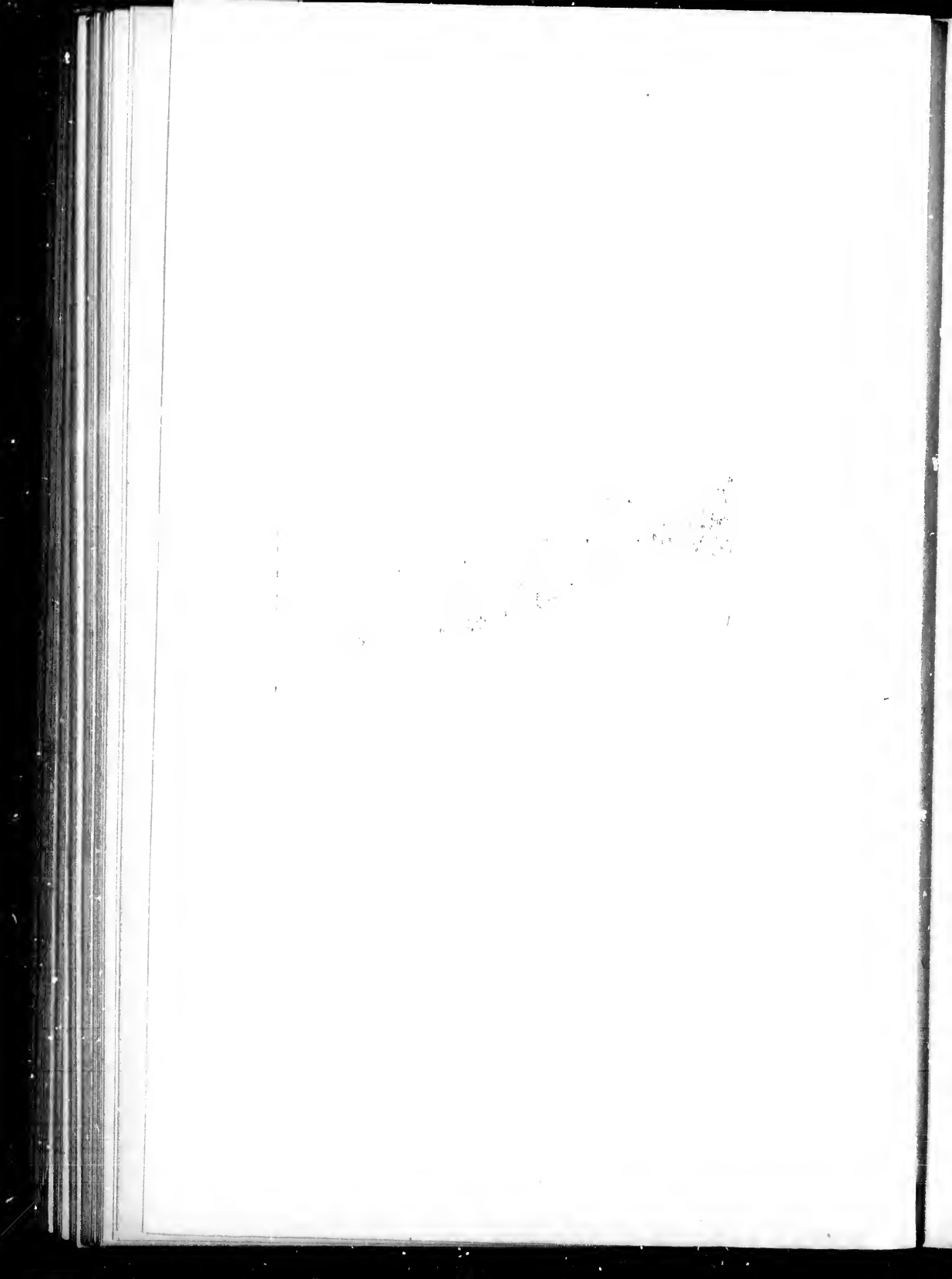
For a time the boys were silent as they watched the scenes through which they were passing. Across from Alexandria Bay toward Grenadier Island they moved, passing at times close to the shores of the

smaller islands and able to give a hail to the people already there; then turning somewhat sharply in its course, the puffing little tug drew them through the narrow passages toward the Canadian channel. It almost seemed to them that they must strike some of the shores, so close to them did they pass. Flags, many of them of the English nation, were waving in the breeze, names of islands were painted in fancy colors on some huge boulder or floated on a streamer underneath the waving flag, skiffs were putting out from boat-houses, or boys and children were fishing from the steep shores directly in front of the cottages. It was a sight as inspiring as it was novel, and small wonder was it that the enthusiasm of the boys almost broke all bounds. There was not a shadow on life, and merely to breathe the bracing air and watch the changing sights were of themselves sufficient to interest them. No two moments were alike, and the name "Fairyland," which they had spied upon one of the islands, seemed best to describe it all.

Ethan pointed out the various places of special interest, and in spite of his air of apparent indifference even his bronzed face



MEANWHILE THE NOISY LITTLE TUG WAS PULLING STEADILY AT ITS BURDEN. Page 105.



began to show that he too was not unmoved by the beauty of the surroundings and the enthusiasm of the boys by his side.

Later he excused himself, and when our boys were summoned to dinner, they discovered that, beneath a canopy on the after deck, the two boatmen had spread a table which to the sight of the beholders seemed fit for a king. Perhaps it would have mattered little what had been prepared for them; they would doubtless have responded with equal zeal in almost any case, so keen was their appetite and so thorough their sense of enjoyment. Their light-hearted laughter woke the echoes from the bald and rocky islands, their songs were borne back upon the soft air, and even their happiness seemed to be reflected in the beautiful places they passed. Apparently all things had conspired to add to their enjoyment.

Meanwhile the noisy little tug was pulling steadily at its burden. The house-boat, though clumsy, was comparatively light and readily followed the lead, and so good time was made. By the middle of the afternoon it had entered the broader waters of the Canadian channel and soon afterward

the course was changed as the tug led the way around Grand View Park and then started across Eel Bay toward the spot on Grindstone Island whither Ethan had ordered it to go.

It was not yet dusk when at last the little cove had been found, the house-boat was made fast for the night, and the tug had departed on its way, leaving behind it a long streamer of black smoke as if it would stretch over the waters a dark ribbon as a token of its reluctance to leave the happy-hearted boys whose shouts and songs and laughter had been heard all the summer afternoon.

CHAPTER IX.

ANCHORED.

No sooner had the noisy little tug disappeared from sight than Ethan said, "We're all fast for the night here now, boys. You'd better be stowing away your belongings while Jed and I are cooking up a supper. I s'pose ye're about ready for somethin' to eat again."

"Always ready, always ready, Ethan," responded Jock. "I'm glad to perceive that you haven't forgotten what we are as well as who we are."

"I'm not likely to forget ye. Do you know how many p'tatoes ye had in your camp last summer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. Perhaps a thousand."

"A thousan'! a thousan'! What d'ye mean? Bushels?"

"Do they measure potatoes by the bushel, Ethan? I didn't know but the custom

was to count them. The truth of the matter is, Ethan, I never thought much about it, anyway. It was the potato itself I was thinking of. I don't have them three times a day when I'm at home."

"What in the world do they feed ye on, then, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, various articles of diet; but we never have potatoes more than once a day."

"That beats me," exclaimed Ethan, at once forgetful of the amount which had been disposed of in the preceding summer; "I don't see what city folks do, then, if they don't have p'tatoes."

"Never mind that now, Ethan, please," suggested Ben, soberly. "You can't have them too often while we're with you. Are you going to leave the house-boat here where we are now?"

"Just for a day or two. We can move on whenever we want to. It's 'most like having yer house on yer back. Whenever ye feel like it ye can move all yer belongings and find a camp jest where ye please." As Ethan turned away to prepare the evening meal, the boys entered the cabin, and for a half-hour were busy in storing away

their belongings. The rooms were small, but sufficiently large to enable them to find places for their possessions. The bunks were made ready for the night, and when these tasks had been completed, the stentorian tones of the boatman were heard summoning them to supper.

The boys responded without any urging, we may be sure, and their delight was great when they discovered that a tempting repast had been prepared and spread on the table on the after deck. The sun had now almost disappeared from sight, but, as the light lingered long in the summer days, they could plainly see all about them.

They were near the shore of one of the larger islands. Huge boulders were piled up near the water, and as the boys glanced over the edge of the house-boat, they could also see that the bottom of the river was covered with great rocks. A thick growth of trees lined the shores, and not far away were other islands, some large and some small. Across Eel Bay they could see skiffs making their way back toward the region where the hotels were, and it required no explanation to understand that the boats contained fishing parties that had

been out for a day's sport. The lapping of the little waves upon the shore provided the music for the banquet. Overhead the silent, twinkling stars were beginning to appear in the heavens, and a soft breeze slightly stirred the leaves of the near-by trees, and the gentle sighing produced added to the weirdness of the scene.

For a moment none of the boys spoke, so impressed were they all by the beauty and strangeness of their surroundings; but in a moment the high-keyed voice of Jed, as well as the demands of their own appetites, recalled them to the immediate duty at hand.

"Better eat yer victuals, boys. They'll be gettin' cold."

The spell was gone, and the boys all fell to with a will. The silence was broken by the laughter and shouts of the campers, and the food began to disappear from the table with a rapidity that produced a smile upon the rugged countenances of both their attendants.

"It doesn't seem as if Count Frontenac ever sailed over these waters, does it, fellows?" said Bob, soberly, as he lifted his third huge potato on the end of his fork.

“Now look here, Bob,” said Bert, sternly, “we’ve got to have this matter settled once and for all. We listened patiently to what you had to say last summer, but I want a pretty clear understanding as to what we’ve got to put up with this year. Do what I will I simply can’t shake off Cartier and Champlain and Cavour and Canada and all the other C’s you told us about. I’m not objecting to your lectures, but I do think we ought to know just when to expect them, and so get ready to endure them.”

“Jock,” said Bob, beseechingly, “you’re the king of this party. Won’t you settle this matter? I’d like to know whether, after all the reading and studying I’ve done this spring, I’m not going to be allowed to say one word about Frontenac.”

“Of course you’re going to tell us all about him,” said Jock, eagerly. “Bert wants to know as much as any of us, but he’s never yet been able to take anything seriously, and so you mustn’t mind him, Bob. You’ve been away from us some time, you know, and perhaps have forgotten that Bert was a freshman only a few short days since.”

“I’m not objecting to the lectures,” re-

plied Bert, sturdily. "I'm as eager to hear about this old fellow — what did you say his name was? — as I am to have Bob leave that last potato there for me. All I object to is that he should be free to inflict his tortures on us any time he chooses, which I suspect will be pretty much all the time. Now just suppose I had hooked a four-pound bass, and just as I began to play him Bob should break in with, 'As I was saying, this Frontenac, after killing nineteen savages by one thrust of his spear and pinning sixteen and a half more to the ground with the dagger which he tenderly but firmly clutched with his left hand, shouted, 'I'm he! I'm here! Behold me, the vassal of Louis the king! I'm a *sic semper tyrannis!* *Vive le roi!* *Enteuthen exelaunei.* *Gallia est omnis divisa,*' and a few other of his choice and somewhat unfamiliar classical expressions, — why, even that bass would let go. No, it's not that I object to the lectures, — it's only that Bob should select an appropriate time in which to deliver them."

"What time would you suggest, Bert?" inquired Ben.

"If it was left with me I'd say between

two and three o'clock in the morning. That's a good quiet hour, and Bob wouldn't be disturbed."

"Stop your nonsense, Bert," laughed Jock. "Now I suggest that Bob give us his stories of Frontenac when we come back to camp every night. I think it'll be great sport to sit around a camp-fire and hear Bob tell all about the old explorers. And then, too, on rainy days he might give us some more."

"I'm agreed to that," responded Bert. "It isn't that I object to Bob's beginning. It's the fear he'll never stop. Bob's like my little brother. You know I've got the smartest little brother in New York, if I do say it. He's only three years old, and the primary class in the Sunday-school was to have an entertainment last Christmas. Well, of course they wanted my brother to take part, they couldn't get along without him, but, like me, he was over modest and bashful, and didn't want to speak his piece. At last they fixed it up by having a whole line of the little tots stand up together, and each one was to speak his piece, and when all had spoken they were to make a bow and retire, cov-

ered with glory, so to speak. Well, when the time came, what do you suppose that little rascal did? After they'd taken their stand on the platform and the performance had begun, that brother of mine spoke his piece six different times. Whenever there came a break or any of the children forgot, he'd start in and give his selection over again. The last thing we could hear when they went off the stage was that brother of mine giving his piece. Now, it's that way with Bob. He's like an alarm clock; if he begins, no power on earth can stop him till he runs down. But if he'll agree to limit his lectures to evenings and rainy days, I'll be just as eager to hear him as any of you."

"Any one would think, to hear my terse and silent friend here, that I was begging for a chance to tell you fellows what it has cost me ducats and midnight oil to get myself," said Bob. "Now, I can assure you I've no desire to inflict my historical knowledge even on Bert."

"That's all right, old fellow," said Jock, quickly, fearful that Bert's good-natured banter had been misunderstood by Bob. "We all want it, Bert just as much as

any one, and it's mighty good of you to work it up for us, too.

"I say, Ethan," he called suddenly, "what do you cali these things?"

As he spoke he held forth an insect in shape very much like a mosquito, only that it was many times larger.

"That's a eel-fly," replied the boatman. "There's lots o' them hereabouts."

"So it seems," exclaimed Bert, quickly rising from his seat. "The woods seem to be full of them. Are they savage, Ethan?"

"Naw! They never hurt nothin' nor nobody no time. If ye're through with that table, we'll fix ye eout so't they won't bother ye no more."

As apparently nothing besides the table and dishes was left of the repast, the boys quickly rose, and in a few minutes the two boatmen had stored the utensils, after washing them, and then, collecting a huge pile of brush and fallen limbs of the trees on the shore, set fire to the mass. A dense cloud of smoke rolled out over the river, and under the lee of the blaze the boys stretched themselves upon the ground, watching the darting flames and the weird shadows they cast

all about them. In a few minutes the boatmen joined them, and seated before the camp-fire, Ethan said, "What's the plan for the mornin', boys?"

"We thought we'd like to try the bass," suggested Jock.

"Which 'd ye like to try first, boys?" inquired Jed. "Bass or suckers?"

"Why, the bass, of course. I didn't know there were any suckers here."

"I didn't say as the' was, did I?" responded Jed, dryly. "But suckers is not far away. My boy, Perry, had a great experience with 'em this spring, he and Sim Fox — he's another boy what lives on the place next to mine. He's jest about the age o' my Perry, only he's about three inches taller and six inches slimmer around the waist. His ma was a Thorn, an' the Thorns was always a slim lot."

"No, his ma wasn't a Thorn," interrupted Ethan. "You're thinkin' o' his pa's fust wife. She was Sairy Thorn. I knew her when she was a girl. Sim's the secon' wife's boy, she that was Mercy Coates."

"I'm not so sure o' that," responded Jed, quickly, scenting a genealogical fray, which is ever dear to the rural mind. "My im-

pression is that Sim's Sairy Thorn's child, and the little fellow is Mercy's boy."

"No, you're mistaken. I know what I'm talkin' abeout," said Ethan, firmly.

"What was it about the suckers?" inquired Jock, quickly, by way of interrupting a discussion of the ancestry of the aforesaid Sim, which he was fearful might lead to results not altogether desirable.

"Oh, as I was a sayin'," resumed Jed, "my boy Perry and Sim Fox — whose ma was Sairy Thorn, as I said — went up to Cold Brook this spring to snare suckers. They got along there by the Snake Rock, and lookin' over they see a whoppin' big sucker, 'most a foot an' a half long. So Sim Fox, — his ma was Sairy Thorn, ye know, — he up an' snared the fellow quicker'n shootin'. Well, they tossed him — the sucker, I mean — into a hollow o' Snake Rock, which had some water in it, an' then they looked down into the brook again, an' there was another sucker, jest as big as the tother one. Perry snared him, and threw him into the puddle in the rock, too. Well, lo an' behold ye, the suckers seemed to come right along on purpose to be snared. About one a minit they

was there, an' every one jest the same size as the fust one they took. Well, they kep' it up for an hour, an' threw every one they got into the puddle in Snake Rock, jest to keep 'em fresh-like, ye see. When a hour had gone, an' Perry an' Sim Fox — his mother was Sairy Thorn, ye know — had about all the fun the' wanted, they thought they'd gather up the suckers an' start for home; so they fixed up their snares, an' went to the hole in the rock to get the fish. Lo an' behold ye, there wasn't but one poor lone sucker in the puddle, an' he was so tuckered eout he couldn't skasely wiggle his tail. Both Perry and Sim — Sim's ma was a Thorn — thought that was queer, an' so they begun to investigate. Neow, what d'ye s'pose they discovered?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said Jock.

"Why, they found out that there was a hole through that rock right straight deown to the brook, an' every time they'd throwed that poor sucker in there he'd just slid right down through that hole into the water again. An' there they'd been a whole hour jest a catchin' the very same sucker over an' over again. No wonder the poor thing was so tuckered out he couldn't do more'n

just wiggle his tail and smile at 'em. Couldn't even slide through the hole at last."

"I don't see just the bearing of that story on our catching bass," said Bob, solemnly, as his companions broke into a loud laugh.

"Why, I don't know as I do, neither," replied Jed, with a grin. "I thought I'd jest tell ye the story, an' you could draw yer own conclusions."

"Jed," remarked Ethan, "Sim Fox's ma was she that was Mercy Coates."

"I know what I'm talkin' abeout," retorted Jed, sharply. "I guess I know the difference between a Thorn an' a Coates."

"Come on, boys, let's go to bed," said Jock, quickly, rising as he spoke, and hoping thereby to put an end to the controversy.

The boys responded; but long after they were in their bunks they could hear the warm tones of the boatmen, and above the stillness of the night the relative merits of the Thorns and Coates were thrown out upon the night wind.

CHAPTER X.

INTERRUPTED SPORT.

WHEN the boys seated themselves at the breakfast table on the following morning, the appearance of the clouds led Jock to say, "It's going to rain, isn't it, Ethan?"

"Looks that way," replied the boatman, glancing at the sky as he spoke.

"Naw; 'twon't rain this mornin'," interrupted Jed. "The sun'll burn away every cloud ye see afore noon."

"You'll find eout abeout that, I'm thinkin'," retorted Ethan, evidently somewhat amazed by the superior airs of his companion.

"No, sir. Jest as sure's you're born, we're goin' to have a good day."

"I shan't say no more," said Ethan, sturdily. "'The proof o' the puddin' is in the eatin'.'"

"I shan't say no more, either," replied Jed, "though there's no more doubt that

this is goin' to be a fine day than that I'm a sittin' here."

"Some folks don't never seem to be able to learn nothin'," replied Ethan, sharply. "They live out all their born days, an' don't know no more'n they did the very first breath they drew. Beats all heow little some folks know."

"That's what it does," retorted Jed, as unmindful of his declaration of silence as was his comrade. "Some folks jest stay in one place all their born days an' think what they see there is all there is to it."

"You talk as if you had travelled, Jed," said Bob, thinking to make an end of the controversy.

"Oh, I've been about some in my time," responded Jed. "I went deown to Mad'son County one time a hop pickin'. Ethan here has never been outside o' Jefferson an' St. Lawrence counties. He thinks everything in all the world is to be measured with his little pint cup."

"I don't have to go off deown to Mad'son County to learn enough to know when it's goin' to rain. I knew that much when I was born. Some folks think jest because

they had a ride on the cars once, that they know it all."

The signs of warfare between the boatmen were not to be mistaken, so Jock, desirous of keeping the peace, quickly interposed, and said: "We thought we'd like to try the fishing this morning, Ethan. We shan't need to go far away from the house-boat, and if it rains, we can come back. That will be all right, won't it?"

"Certain. Jest as soon as Jed an' I have cleared away the breakfast dishes, we'll put out, if ye so desire. Come on, Jed."

The boys at once arose and departed to prepare their fishing tackle, and while these preparations were going on they could hear the boatmen engaged in a conversation which evidently was entirely friendly, and so the storm which threatened to disturb the peace of the camp had passed, they concluded. The rivalry of the men was a fact which must not be forgotten they now were well aware, and though they laughed over it as they talked together while they were fitting out their rods and preparing for the sport of the day, all four of them realized that serious trouble for

the camp might result from it, and Jock repeatedly cautioned his friends to be on their guard against fanning the little flame into a blaze.

In a brief time all things were in readiness, and Ethan's hail announced that the boatmen were waiting. The elder man was seated in one of the two skiffs which had been brought with them, and Jed was in the other. The party was divided as it had been in the preceding summer, Jock and Bob going with Ethan, and Bert and Ben casting in their lot with Jed. The rooms of the house-boat had been locked by the boys, though some of their belongings were left on the deck, both boatmen declaring that nothing would be disturbed during their absence.

When they started Ethan rowed in one direction and Jed in the opposite, and just before the latter's boat disappeared around the point, Ethan shouted, "Put back to camp, Jed, when it begins to rain."

"'Tisn't goin' to rain!" shouted Jed, in reply.

"That Jed Bates is the most conceited fellow on the St. Lawrence River," muttered Ethan. "Jest because he went off one

time pickin' hops deown to Mad'son County, he thinks he's seen the whole creation an' some things besides. When it begins to rain, as it will inside o' three hours, mebbe he'll change his tune an' sing a different song."

"Why did you get him, then, Ethan?" inquired Jock.

"Oh, he does as well as any on 'em. They're mostly alike, an' it's a which an' t'other with them all. Seems like as if every man hereabouts was so conceited you can't do nothin' with him.

"I was reading the other day," said Bob, "about a man who served on a jury, and it seems he was all alone in his opinion, and all the other eleven men had agreed on a verdict. But this one man still held out, and after the disagreement had been reported, he explained it by saying that they were eleven of the most obstinate men he ever had seen. In fact, he couldn't seem to do anything with them."

"That's jest it," said Ethan, quickly, and evidently failing to see the point of Bob's remark. "That's jest the way it is with these fellows deown here. They're the most obstinate lot ye ever seen. Ye jest

can't reason with 'em any more'n ye can lead a pig by a halter. Ye might jest as well give up first as last. I'd let eout my lines neow, boys, if I was you," he added, as he rested on his oars and attached a minnow to each of their hooks. "Neow we'll see what we'll see," he said, as once more he resumed his labors, rowing close inshore and moving slowly against the current.

In a few minutes Bob felt the welcome tug that betokened the "strike," and profiting by his experience of the preceding summer, played his fish well and soon drew his victim alongside the skiff, where Ethan with his landing net secured the fish. Tossing it into the fish-box, he attached another minnow to Bob's hook and then turned his attention to Jock, whose line was darting through the water at a rate of speed to indicate that he must have hooked a prize. Jock, too, was successful, but when his fish was landed his disappointment was keen when he perceived that it could not weigh more than three-quarters of a pound.

"I thought I had a big one," he explained, as Ethan baited his hook and tossed it outside the boat.

"Ye aren't likely to get many big ones

this time o' the year. Ye may get more on 'em, but later in the season they've had a time to flesh up and get more sizable. They seem to be bitin' pretty well here, so I guess I'll put out the anchor and let ye try it still fishin' awhile."

The "anchor" consisted of a large square stone, attached to a rope. This was slowly lowered into the water and when it rested upon the bottom of the river, the skiff swung around with the current and in a few minutes was motionless and still.

For an hour and a half the boys continued their sport and secured a dozen or more of the bass, though as Ethan had prophesied, the most of them were small. Some of them, however, made up in gaminess for what they lacked in size, and both Bob and Jock were well content.

"There comes the rain!" exclaimed Ethan, exultingly, as the heavy drops began to fall. "I wonder what Jed Bates'll have to say neow. He'd better go off deown to Mad'son County some more! I guess he's better at pickin' hops than he is at tellin' what the weather's goin' to be. Shall I go back to camp, boys?"

"Yes, I think you'd better," replied Jock. "We can try it again to-morrow, and besides we've all the fish we'll want for a day, especially if the other fellows have had any luck."

"No knowin' what luck they'll have along with Jed Bates," growled Ethan, as he pulled in the anchor. "If he doesn't know any more about fishin' than he does about the weather, they'll not be loaded, I'm thinkin'."

As the rain was now falling steadily, Ethan began to row swiftly, and soon they came within sight of the house-boat. As soon as they landed, Ethan, with the aid of the boys, spread the canopy over the after deck, and covering the three sides, left the fourth exposed. This was in the lee of the storm, and enabled them to see far out over the river in the direction in which their companions had gone.

Sheltered as they were from the rain, the experience was an enjoyable one, although they had been compelled to forego a part of the morning's sport. The rain dashed against the covering, but could not penetrate it. On the river, as the drops fell, they seemed to cause a strange commotion,

and Jock could compare the sight with nothing except corn in a corn-popper. The wind was beginning to rise now, and the little ripples near the shore were beginning to be more like genuine waves. The "chaffing" which Bob and Jock had been preparing for their friends when they should return, was soon forgotten as the little skiff failed to appear. Indeed, Ethan himself was evidently becoming anxious, but when a half-hour had elapsed, the boat was discovered coming swiftly around the point, and the relief of all three was apparent.

As soon as it landed, Ethan, unmindful of his former anxiety, said dryly, "Did ye see any signs o' rain out there, Jed?"

"The wind shifted or 'twouldn't 'a' rained," replied that worthy, glumly.

"Yes, but I knew it was goin' to shift," said Ethan. "D'ye know where I thought ye'd gone to, Jed?"

Jed looked up, but made no reply, so Ethan continued: "I thought ye'd gone off deown to Mad'son County pickin' hops. I did, fer a fact; seems to me, though, that if I was a boatman on the St. Lawrence, I'd jest abeout as soon know when it was a goin'

to rain hereabouts as I would to be informed about the wonders of that hop county. How is it with you, Jed?"

Ethan's rival was evidently chagrined, and his appearance might well have called for mercy on the part of his companion; but the elder boatman apparently was determined to make the most of his present opportunity, and accordingly, instead of ceasing, continued his speeches:—

"I s'pose ye had putty fair luck?" he inquired. "Fish bite putty well when it rains. Heow many did ye get, Jed?"

"Didn't get very many," responded Jed, gloomily.

"But heow many did ye get?"

"The wind stirred the water all up. Ye can't catch fish then."

"Some folks can, and some can't. Depends on the folks as much as it does on the weather, in my 'pinion. Heow many did ye get?"

"I didn't count 'em."

"Bring on yer fish-box an' I'll help ye," exclaimed Ethan, exultingly.

"'Twon't take long to count 'em."

"Jed Bates, heow many bass did ye catch this mornin'?"

"Heow many did *you* get?" suddenly inquired Jed, turning at last after the manner of the proverbial worm upon his tormenter.

"Oh, nothing much to speak of. Ye see, I knew 'twas goin' to storm an' I didn't intend to keep my boys out in the rain. I know sometimes when it's goin' to rain, an' when it does rain I know enough to go in eout o' it."

"Heow many bass did ye get, Ethan?" persisted Jed, who, instead of perceiving that his rival was simply leading him on, now thought that he had the tables turned. "Heow many did ye get? Come neow, eout with it, will ye!"

"We got thirteen."

"Not bass?"

"Yes, bass. 'Twasn't much of a catch, but we didn't try very hard." Jed's countenance fell, and his rival, quick to follow up his evident advantage, continued, "Neow I've told you heow many we got, you tell us what your catch was."

As Jed still hesitated, Bert suddenly darted forth from the shelter of the canopy, and a moment afterward returned with the fish-box in his hands. When he opened this,

he disclosed to the sight of the assembly two little perch.

A loud laugh greeted the sight, and Ethan, with a grin on his face, said, "Don't laugh, boys; when a man has done the best he knows heow, ye shouldn't poke fun at him. For my part, I think Jed done first-rate."

"Ye can't furnish fish and fishermen too," retorted Jed, stung at last beyond his power to restrain himself. "There was plenty o' bass, but the boys let every one o' 'em get away. Yes, sir, they never landed one all the mornin'."

"Hear! hear!" shouted Bob, delightedly.

"Ethan probably caught all *you* had," retorted Bert. "Didn't you, Ethan?" he added.

The boatman smiled and there were at once signs that the warfare would spread, so Jock, for the sake of peace, quickly interposed, "I say, fellows, this is the time and this is the place for Bob to give us his story of Frontenac."

"Frontenac?" sniffed Jed, apparently having discovered a means of redeeming himself. "I guess everybody knows what an' where that is."

“Do you?” inquired Jock.

“I should say I did; why, everybody knows it’s the big hotel over to Round Island.”

Disconcerted by the laugh which followed, Jed said, “But it is jest as I’m tellin’ ye.”

“Yes, but where did the hotel get its name?” inquired Ben.

“Keep still, fellows,” said Jock, “and Bob will tell us all about it.”

Thus bidden, Bob began his story, and in a few moments even Ethan and Jed were as deeply interested listeners as were their young companions.

CHAPTER XI.

FRONTENAC.

“It seems strange,” began Bob, “that this region of the St. Lawrence should ever have been the scene of wars and struggles, and romances, too, for the matter of that. Now, wherever one goes he finds little villages or scattered farm-houses, and the people don’t appear to be very warlike unless you happen to touch them on a tender spot, such as whether Sim Fox’s mother was a Thorn or a Coates.”

“She was a Coates,” said Ethan, quickly, glancing defiantly at Jed as he spoke. But the rival boatman made no reply, for the experiences of the morning had not been such as to appeal to his controversial powers.

“It is a land of romance,” resumed Bob; “more so than I ever dreamed until I began to read up on Frontenac this spring. I don’t think his character is one to be commended in every respect, but he had some very admirable qualities, and then, too, we

must measure a man by the standards of his own times, not by ours. I remember reading in Macaulay's histories somewhere — I don't know that I can give you his exact words, but I can tell you the substance — that when we are disposed to take a dark or desponding view of the present times, we must not forget that in almost every case what is new is not the evils, but the enlightened conscience which calls them evil. The evils have been here all the time, but they weren't looked upon as evil until people grew enough to know it."

"Do ye mean to say as heow this man says the times when we live are better'n those before us?" demanded Ethan, sharply.

"Yes, that's just it," replied Bob.

"I don't believe no sech thing," snorted the boatman. "Anybody with half an eye can see that things is growin' worse all the time — worse an' worse."

"Have it your own way, Ethan," said Bob. "I'm only telling you what one of the great historians wrote. So, if he is correct, Frontenac must be judged by his own times and not by ours, for it was more than two hundred years ago when he was in this country. He was born when Louis XIII.

was king of France, and indeed King Louis gave Frontenac his own name. When Louis XIV. came to the throne, however, he proved to be a man of very different make-up from his father. I know he was cruel and thoroughly bad in many ways, but he was a brave and able king, probably the ablest France ever had.

“Well, young Frontenac was a man after his own heart, for he was bold and reckless, kind-hearted, but ever ready for war. Indeed, he is said to have carried the war into his own family, for even his wife couldn't get along with him, though as she was one of the strong-minded females, a kind of woman's-rights woman in her own day and generation, perhaps that is not to be wondered at, after all. There's a bit of a romance, too, connected with their marriage, for it seems that her family were bitterly opposed to her marrying the young soldier, as he had only an income of twenty thousand francs a year, and they didn't want her to pass through life a pauper.”

“Twenty thousand francs!” interrupted Ethan. “Heow much is that?”

“Oh, somewhere about four thousand dollars.”

“An’ her folks didn’t want her to marry this chap when he only had four thousand dollars a year?”

“That’s what the histories inform us.”

“They must ‘a’ been high-flyers,” muttered the boatman. “I don’t b’lieve there’s six men at the Corners that git more’n three hundred dollars a year.”

“They don’t have to live in France, fortunately for them,” said Bob. “Well, Frontenac and his wife that was to be followed the example of Pyramus and Thisbe in more ways than one, and the upshot of it was that they were married and didn’t live happily forever after. He was very successful in his way, and was a very young man when he held a commission that would be equivalent to a brigadier-general with us. He’d fought in most of the countries of Europe, and was looked upon as a promising and able man. But you don’t care anything about his experiences and exploits in the Old World, I know, and so I’ll skip over all those things, and come to his life and work on the St. Lawrence.

“He was fifty-two years of age when, in 1672, he landed at Quebec. It must have been a great change for him, for he didn’t

find a very large city there, you may be sure, though King Louis and his secretary, Colbert, had been sending over shiploads of people every summer. Frontenac was as fiery and quick-tempered, as full of push and go, as ever he had been, and as he had lost what little money he had, perhaps he was thinking as much of what he might do to build up his own fortune as he was of what the king of France wanted to accomplish in the New World, for both Louis and Colbert had great schemes for New France. It is said that there were other and personal reasons why Louis wanted to be rid of the presence of Frontenac; but be that as it may, the soldier of fortune hadn't more than landed before he began to stir up matters in Quebec.

"The first thing he did was to make himself acquainted with the real condition of affairs. He was a soldier, and so was quick to see that Quebec was a wonderful site for a capital of a great nation that was yet to be. Then he personally talked with the traders and all the men in the city and all who came to it, he visited the farms and fishing stations, and even inspected the unfinished boats that were then on the stocks.

He was a great man for display—he'd probably learned that in the court of Louis—and he didn't like the idea of a lieutenant-general of the king of France being compelled to lie on the bottom of a birch canoe when he visited the various parts of his domain, but for a time he couldn't help himself."

"Not if he was in a birch-bark canoe," suggested Ben, feelingly.

Bob laughed as he continued: "King Louis, as you know, was a great believer in the divine right of kings. He had been working hard to get everything into his own hands so that his word was law. He and Colbert wanted the same thing done in New France, but Frontenac wasn't a great enthusiast over that thing, and as the king was more than three thousand miles away, and it took months for word to be sent, he made up his mind he'd go ahead on his own responsibility, and go ahead he did. .

"The very first thing the people of Quebec knew, not to go into all the details of the thing, Frontenac had established there the three orders of the state,—the clergy, nobles, and commons. Of course, though he wasn't a very strong believer in everything being put in the power of one man,

at least as far as the king was concerned, he didn't object to it so much when it was Count Frontenac who was in control. He was as sure he was right as Jed here was that it wasn't going to rain this morning."

"He must 'a' been sure," muttered Ethan, with a grin, but Jed could not be induced to break his silence.

"Of course," resumed Bob, "he didn't have much trouble in making up the first order, for the Jesuits and priests provided that. The second order was more difficult, but there were three or four men of some rank at Quebec, and Frontenac filled up the list with some of his own officers, though he didn't have much more than a small body-guard then. The third class was composed of the merchants and traders, and after all had been arranged the count had a great assembly in a church which the Jesuits lent him. You see they were glad to put him under obligations to them, and thought they would surely be able to manage him as they had all the others before him. But this time they reckoned without their host, for Frontenac wasn't exactly the kind of a man to be managed by anybody, not even by Louis the king

and Colbert. However, he delivered an address before the great assembly in the church and praised Louis to the skies. You see, along with his other accomplishments Frontenac was a fine writer and a magnificent orator, and just as soon as he began to speak he had all the people with him, though as a matter of fact he was talking as much to the rulers of far-away France as he was to his audience in Quebec.

“Soon after he reorganized the city government of Quebec and so fixed it that after all he kept the reins pretty well in his own hands. He was a hard man, that Frontenac, to go ahead with all this; but he didn't meet with very much opposition in the city, though Colbert wrote him a very polite little note when he heard of what was going on; and if the count had been a little more tractable, he might have read between the lines and saved himself the mortification which came by putting an end to his schemes of government instead of having the king do it as he did.

“Already the opposition and the work of the Jesuits were beginning to tell, and as they had means of knowing what was going on inside the inner circles of the

court of Louis, as well as in the New World, they had Frontenac at a disadvantage. He wasn't for yielding one bit, however, and wrote the king that the Jesuits were really ruling everybody and everything; but that only seemed to increase their anger and didn't help Frontenac a bit. Some of the Jesuit missionaries were undoubtedly good men, but the count wouldn't ever admit that much. One writer here said that whenever the Indians came into contact with the white men, they at once adopted their vices and ignored their virtues, which was in a measure true. But Frontenac knew that Louis was very desirous of helping the Indians, and wanted them to become civilized and a part of his people. This was what Frontenac himself desired, but at first he knew no more of the Indians than did Louis. The count at one time induced the Iroquois to place four of their boys and four of their girls in his care, and he in turn put the children in the schools at Quebec; but the Jesuits strongly opposed him, so that he declared that instead of helping the savages, they were more desirous of simply bringing them into bondage and cared more for their furs than they did for

their souls. Of course the Jesuits retorted in kind, and loudly affirmed that Frontenac himself was not averse to receiving the furs the red men brought, taking them at a small price and disposing of them for sums that never seemed to be able to get beyond the pockets of the lieutenant-general himself. In all probability there was some truth in the charges on both sides, for when men become angry, they are very apt to tell things just as they are."

"Except when they get to talkin' about who Sim Fox's ma was," interrupted Ethan; "then they sometimes stretches the truth an' talk about Thorns when they mean Coateses. I've seen such folks myself, time an' again."

Without heeding the interruption, Bob speedily continued: "Frontenac was holding his own in Quebec remarkably well, however, and he soon learned that his real troubles lay in the regions beyond. His predecessor in office, Courcelle, had recommended the building of a fort near the outlet of Lake Ontario. A fort there, he claimed, would keep the Iroquois silent; for they had been becoming more and more troublesome of late, and it would also be a

help and protection to the fur traders who would sometimes go as far as the upper lakes in their expeditions. Frontenac at once approved of the plan, and found a young man after his own heart — Cavalier de la Salle — to help him.

“This made the fur traders and the Jesuits — Frontenac said they were one and the same thing — simply furious. They claimed that the count was just fixing matters so that he himself could control the whole trade. Well, as it had been in their hands for some time, and they had monopolized it, naturally they didn't like the idea of being driven out of business.”

“Then they had trusts and monopolies, even in those days,” said Jock.

“It seems so. Well, on his way up to the lake, Frontenac stopped off at Montreal. You see Montreal was a hundred and eighty miles from Quebec in those days — ”

“How far is it now?” inquired Bert, solemnly.

“That's jest about what it is neow,” replied Jed, quickly. “I went deown there once myself.”

“On your way to Madison County?” inquired Bert.

"Naw, naw. Mad'son County is 'way off in t'other direction. It's 'way down b'low Uticy. Ye have to change cars twice."

"As I was saying," began Bob again, quickly, "Frontenac found a great state of affairs at Montreal, and as he never could see an opening for a squabble without going in himself, he soon was having a great time. Indeed, it was at Montreal that the first of his exciting experiences began, and from that time on Frontenac's life reads almost like a novel."

"It's 'most dinner time neow," suggested Ethan.

"I'll stop," replied Bob, promptly.

"It seems strange to think of what was done along the river so many years ago," said Jock, thoughtfully. "I suppose it was a part of the life here then, but it doesn't seem much like that which we see now."

"You ought to see that, too," replied Bob. "Every one ought to know something about the history of his own country." And leading the way, he departed from the deck to enable the boatmen to prepare their dinner.

CHAPTER XII.

A PERILOUS VENTURE.

By the middle of the afternoon the rain had ceased falling, but the sport of the morning could not be resumed, both boatmen agreeing that the fish would leave the shoals for the deeper water.

"They 'most always does that," Ethan explained in reply to a question of Ben. "No, I don't think it's because they mind the rain, for that wouldn't seem natural-like. It's 'most likely because the river gets all stirred up, an' they want to be where it's safe, for bass like to have an anchor to windward same as folks do; and minnows," he added as an anti-climax.

Bob offered to resume his story of Frontenac, but though his friends expressed their interest in the old hero, still it was decided that one lecture a day would be sufficient, and that other means of passing the time must be found. Accordingly, books and

games were produced, and for an hour or two sufficed to interest the campers; but even these failed to satisfy the demands after a time.

"I'm going to try a mutton-leg in one of those skiffs," declared Ben, when he could endure the tediousness no longer. "Will you go with me, Bert?"

"I will that," replied Bert, eagerly.

"It's a putty stiff breeze for a green-horn to be sailin' in," remarked Ethan, dubiously.

"Yes, an' it's my 'pinion as heow the wind is goin' to be stronger still afore night," said Jed, whose confidence and spirits had by this time returned.

"I don't b'lieve it's goin' to blow much," retorted Ethan. "If you boys'll promise to stick close to this part o' the country, an' not go beyond the sight o' the heouse-boat, I guess ye won't get no harm."

Eager to seize the desired permission before it could be revoked, though all the boys felt that Ethan had spoken more confidently than he really had believed in his instantaneous opposition to the expressed opinion of his rival, Ben ran to one of the skiffs and in a few minutes had the mast in

its place and the little sail with a big reef in it ready for use.

"Come on, Bert!" called Ben, gleefully; "we'll have a spin over the river."

"He means a spill more likely," growled Jed. "'Tisn't fit for the boys to be out, for it'll be a gale afore long, as sure's you're born."

No heed was given the croakings of Jed, so eager were the boys to start, and so the evident anxiety of Ethan was also overlooked. The elder boatman, however, remained silent, though he had the other skiff equipped and made ready for instant use, should occasion demand it, and in a moment Bert and Ben were off.

As soon as the little sail was hoisted the wind filled it, and the skiff went skimming over the water as swift as a race-horse. Ben was seated in the stern, using an oar for a rudder, and Bert with his seat on the rail responded to the demands of his companion, and by frequently changing his seat managed to aid in trimming the sail.

Ben was mindful of his promise to Ethan and did not venture beyond the sight of the house-boat, which he greeted with a cheer when he passed it. The skiff almost

seemed to be endowed with life and to share in the delight of the boys. Up and down and back and forth it passed, Ben handling his oar skilfully all the time, and carefully avoiding the shore. The sight served to arouse both Jock and Bob, who from the deck of the house-boat were watching their friends, and at last Jock could contain himself no longer.

"I say, Ethan," he exclaimed, "why can't Bob and I take the other skiff and go over for our mail? We must have a bagful by this time."

"It'll keep," replied Ethan, shortly.

"Yes, but we don't want to overload their handbox of a post-office. Just see that, will you!" he exclaimed, as Ben came about, and the canoe apparently almost on its side sped forward with increased speed. "Do you expect us to stand here quiet as mummies when the other fellows are having such sport as that? Ethan, I just know I've got a letter at the office, and I must have it. Besides, there may be a check in it."

"Can't help it, ye can't take the only skiff left here."

"There's the canoe," suggested Bob,

pointing as he spoke to Ben's pride, which was lying on the bank near by.

"I'd as soon have a chip," snorted Ethan. "No, sir. Ye don't go eout in this skiff afore the other boys come back."

"All right, we'll go then," said Bob, quickly; and, stepping forward to the edge of the deck, he shouted to his companions, who were now rapidly approaching. "Hello, Ben!" he called, "come in here!"

A shout from the passing skiff came back on the wind, and in a brief time Ben had headed his boat for the shore. As he came close in he shouted, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong, except that you've been gone too long. Jock and I want a turn now."

"There's the other skiff," suggested Bert, who was in no mind to give up the sport he was having; "use that."

"Ethan won't let us," replied Bob. "He wants one skiff left here so that he can use it in case anything goes wrong with the other. Come in now, and do your duty. It's wicked to be selfish in this cold, cold world, and keep all the fun to yourselves."

In a brief time the skiff was successfully landed, and, as Jock and Bob prepared to

take their places in it, Jed called out: "I wouldn't try to go over to the post-office if I was in your place, boys. The wind is a goin' to blow stiffer'n it is neow. Better take my advice, and wait till to-morrow."

Jock hesitated a moment, and glanced at Ethan before he replied. Neither he nor Bob had any desire to incur unnecessary risks, though the temptation to go was almost irresistibly strong.

"I know what I'm talkin' about," repeated Jed. "Ye'd better not go. Jest stay around camp this afternoon, an' go fer yer mail to-morrow."

Jed's declaration settled the matter, for Ethan, though it was against his better judgment, was not to be advised by his rival. "If ye go, boys, ye'll have to row back. The wind'll take ye over all right, but comin' back ye'll have to row," he said.

"That will be all right, if that's all," responded Jock, gleefully. "It'll be great fun to have a chance to use our muscles, for we've been shut in all day."

In a moment the little sail was hoisted, and the skiff started smoothly on its way. Jed turned sharply about, and, in evident

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disgust, retired into the house-boat. Ethan and the two lads left behind remained standing on the deck, all feeling more anxiety than they cared to express as they watched the swiftly disappearing skiff. They could see that it had already shipped considerable water, for the actions of the boys, as well as the careering of the boat, clearly disclosed that. In a brief time, however, the skiff disappeared around the projecting point of the island opposite, and when it could no longer be seen all three of the watchers retired from the deck.

Meanwhile, in the swiftly departing skiff there was a silence as intense as it was eloquent. Neither of the boys had fully realized what it meant to be out on the river in such a wind, and it is safe to say that both heartily wished themselves back in the shelter of the house-boat.

Still, as neither expressed his fears, the other did not know of his companion's feeling, and each, thinking that the other was fearless, doggedly held to his task. Again and again the skiff shipped water, but Bob, who was steering, was careful and cautious, so as yet they had not suffered any harm

greater than a good wetting. The wind was with them, and so swiftly were they driven onward that almost before they were aware of it they had entered within the sheltered bay, and soon afterward landed at the dock.

As they stepped ashore, Jock whistled as he said: "That's what you may call running before the wind. I wonder at Ethan's letting us come. I shouldn't, if I had been in his place."

There was no one on the dock besides themselves at the time, and so their approach had been unnoticed by the people in the large hotel near by. Rejoicing for once that they were unseen by others, the boys turned to walk up the broad pathway toward the hotel, where they expected to find their mail awaiting them.

"It isn't just fair to blame Ethan for what we did," said Bob. "If I remember aright, we rather forced the matter ourselves. Jock, do you want to try to go back? We can stay here over night and go back in the morning."

"I'd agree to that in a minute if it wasn't for Ethan and the fellows. They would be worrying about us, and might set

out to find us. I haven't forgotten about the scare Ben gave us last summer."

"Nor I," replied Bob. "Perhaps we had better try it. If we can't make it, we can put back if we have to."

Bob tried to speak confidently, but the fear in his heart was great. They had promised Ethan that they would not use the sail on their return, and Bob felt that the promise was secure enough, for the wind would be dead against them, and he had not sufficient confidence in his own ability as a sailor to attempt to make his way by sailing against it. They must use their oars, and as he thought of the contest awaiting them, his anxiety increased. For his own part, he decidedly preferred to remain at the hotel for the night; but as Jock seemed to prefer making an attempt, at least, to go back to their companions, he offered no further objections.

As soon as they had received their letters, and there were many of these for the camp, they returned to the dock, and after bailing out their skiff at once prepared to return. There was only one pair of oars, and the boys agreed to take turns in rowing, Bob being the first to use them. Jock

took his seat in the stern, and Bob, after casting off, quickly seated himself and began to row.

“This is easier than I thought it would be,” he said, as the skiff swept out into the river.

Jock made no reply, for he was well aware that the real test had not yet come. They were still sheltered, to an extent, by the surrounding islands; but when they passed out into the waters of Eel Bay, they would feel the full force of the wind.

His fears were fulfilled a few moments afterward when they passed the last of the intervening islands. The waves were high here, and the light skiff rose and fell, as it might have done on the ocean, and once or twice was almost caught in the trough of the sea. The white caps were visible on every side, and the wind drove the spray upon them so that they were soon drenched.

Jock insisted upon taking his turn at the oars, and succeeded in changing places with Bob, although the boat was nearly swamped in the attempt. For a time he succeeded in making some headway, for Bob's last efforts had shown that he had used up the

most of his strength, but soon Jock, too, was almost exhausted. Then the plan of each boy using one oar was tried, and this, too, for a brief interval served to send the skiff forward. The sun was now low in the western sky, and the appearance of the clouds might have increased the anxiety of the rowers had they noted it, but both were too much engaged in their occupation to heed other matters. Bob's hat had been lost, and Jock's face betrayed his alarm. They pulled and pulled desperately. The skiff rolled and tossed, and the water that was shipped visibly increased. It was now apparently a struggle for life. They had almost ceased to mark the distant shores. The wind was howling, and the waves were becoming still more boisterous. Labor and struggle as the boys might, it seemed as if no progress could be made; and when suddenly Jock lost his oar, and almost fell overboard in his attempt to regain it, a groan escaped from both.

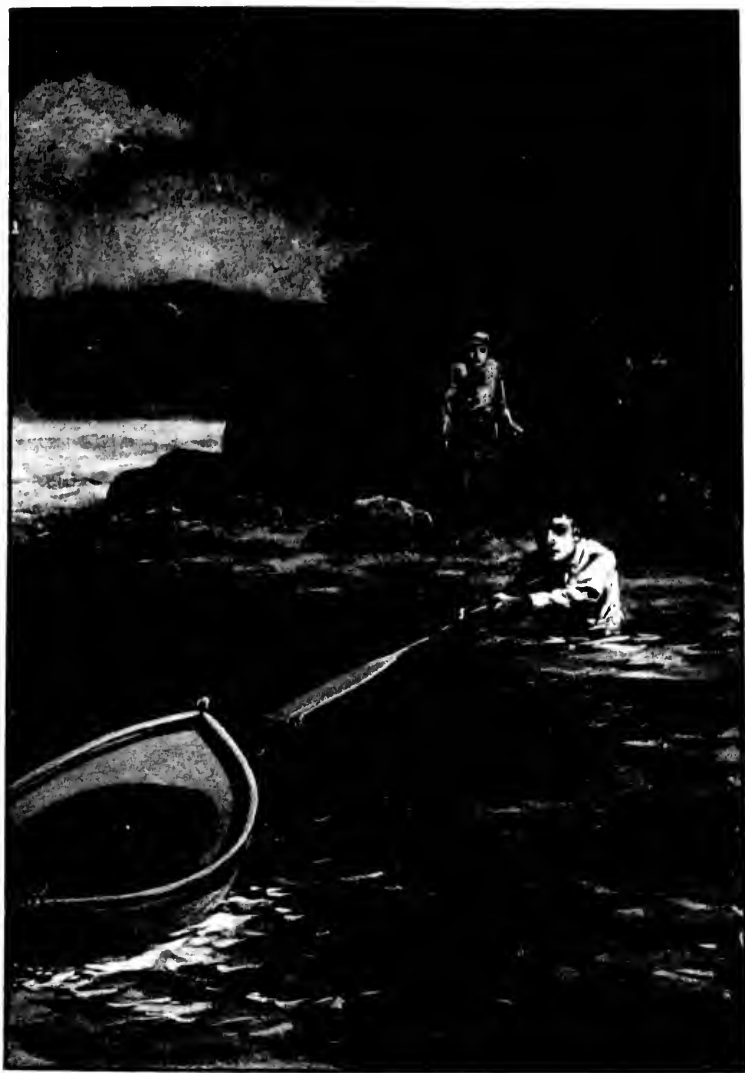
Bob now used the remaining oar as a rudder, and, after successfully turning the skiff about, started for the nearest shore, unmindful of all things save of finding a place of shelter.

Swiftly the boat sped on before the gale, and when it came near the shore, in his attempt to land, the boys were almost thrown into the water. In his confusion, Jock leaped overboard, the water coming only to his waist, and in Bob's attempt to follow him, he lost his hold upon the painter, and in a moment the wind had swept the boat out into the river beyond their reach.

Wet, and almost exhausted, they had succeeded in gaining the shore, but their skiff was gone, and all that remained was the one oar which the disconsolate Bob was still holding in his hands.

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THE SKIFF FLOATED WITH THE CURRENT BEYOND HIS GRASP.
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CHAPTER XIII.

AN ALARM.

THE sun had long since disappeared from sight, and night had settled over the river, but there was still sufficient light to enable the two boys to see the expression upon the other's face. For a moment neither spoke, and then, recalled by the sight of the drifting skiff, Bob made a rush toward a projecting point near which it was evident the boat would pass in its course.

In spite of all his efforts, however, the skiff floated with the current beyond his grasp, and though he waded into the water until it came well up to his shoulders and endeavored to reach the boat with the one remaining oar, he was unable to secure it.

Convinced that the skiff was lost, Bob returned to the shore and said to Jock, who had now approached, "We're in for a night of it, Jock. The boat's gone for good and all."

“Well, we’re here, Bob, and that is something to be thankful for. A few minutes ago it didn’t seem as if we’d ever set foot on shore again.”

“That’s the way to look at it, I suppose; but somehow I can’t seem to get up a bit of enthusiasm. Here we are cast away on a desert island, wet to our skins, with every match soaked, and not a place where we can lay our heads. Robinson Crusoe had a picnic compared with us.”

“Never mind, Bob, I’d rather be here than where we were, anyway. Now what we’ve got to think out is whether we’re going to stay here or not.”

“I don’t believe our thinking will have much to do with that, for I fancy we’ll stay just the same, no matter how much we exert our massive intellects. I’ve heard of a flight of the imagination, but I never knew a man to cross the St. Lawrence on his brains. It’s a rather unsubstantial foothold, in my opinion.”

Across the water they could see the flickering lights in some of the cottages and summer camps. How near they seemed, and yet, though some of them were not more than a quarter of a mile away,

they might as well have been on the other side of the globe, as far as any assistance they could render our boys was concerned. To make matters still worse, it was evident that the wind was increasing, and the noise of the waters, combined with the whistling of the wind, seemed to aggravate the perplexity of their position.

"Bob," said Jock, at last, "don't you think we might be able to make the people off there to our left hear us if we yelled together? I don't think the light is so very far away."

"So near and yet so far," said Bob. "We can try it, anyway."

Together the boys raised a shout, that under ordinary circumstances would have been heard in the near-by camp; but the roar of the wind and rain together carried the cry far away, and after repeating their efforts several times, they gave up the attempt.

"What next?" inquired Jock, disconsolately.

"Let's take a run around the island," suggested Bob. "As we haven't any matches, and nothing to make a fire of, we'll have to start the internal fires or we'll

have icicles clinging to our benighted frames if we don't look out. Come on, I'll lead the way."

With his oar still held in his hands, Bob started along the shore, and Jock followed obediently. Running slowly they felt the warmth which came as the result of their exertions, but they soon were aware of the fact, of which Bob at least had been apprehensive, that the island was a small one, and that there was not a house or a building of any kind upon it. In a brief time, they had completed the circuit of the shore, and returned to the place from which they had set forth.

"If we could only find a man Friday," suggested Jock, striving to keep up his spirits, "we'd be all right."

"It'll be Friday before we find a man, if that's what you mean," replied Bob. "Now, Jock, have you any suggestions to make?"

"Lots of them, but I'm afraid they're not very practical."

"Keep your theories, then. What we want now, is to find out some way to get dry, and where we can stay till morning, for I haven't any idea we'll leave this island before to-morrow."

"The bank seemed to be a little higher on the other side," suggested Jock. "We might go around there again and see if we can't get out of the wind. That'll be one step, anyway, in the right direction."

"I feel that I'm becoming eloquent," said Bob. "The fine frenzy is upon me, Jock. Look out now. Here it comes:—

"Tell me, ye winged winds, that round my pathway
roar,

Is there no spot — no quiet spot — where mortals
weep no more?"

I'm not just sure that they are the exact words, but that's the sentiment of the thing. 'Winged winds,' and 'roar' and 'more' are all right, and I wish to inquire whether you ever heard a more appropriate harangue in all your mortal life, my boy?"

"There's no poetry left in me," said Jock, nevertheless laughing at the words of his friend. "I'm a good deal more anxious to find a shelter than I am to stand up here howling at the wind. Come on, Bob, let's go around to the place I mentioned."

"I'm your most obedient servant," replied Bob, as together the boys started across the land toward the spot to which Jock had referred.

There were but few trees on the island, and these had been so whipped and beaten by the winter winds that they could afford no protection to the boys. Bob still carried his oar,—a token of former days, he declared it to be,—though to what use he expected to put it he himself could not have explained. He was endeavoring now to keep up his own spirits as well as those of his companion, and so kept up a running comment upon the experiences of the night, striving to belittle them all and confidently asserting that before the time for breakfast came they would be back with their recent comrades in the house-boat.

When they arrived at the bank to which Jock had referred, they discovered that under its shelter they could escape the force of the wind. The shore was sandy, and though wet from the recent storm, they were far more comfortable than they had been in the more exposed part of the island.

“This is fit for a king,” said Bob, lightly, as he turned over a flat stone and seated himself under the lee of the bank, an example which his companion speedily followed.

“According to your stories of kings, that isn’t saying very much,” said Jock.

"It depends upon your point of view. Now there are some poor, benighted, soft-headed beings in our land who are ever trying to make a saint out of King Charles. Saint Charles the One! Just think of it, Jock."

"It's the unsaintly St. Lawrence I'm thinking more about," responded Jock. "He served us a mean trick."

"What! to spare your innocent young life and cast you up on this friendly shore for the night? You're a grateful fellow, I must say."

"The wind seems to be going down," suggested Jock, not being desirous of continuing the conversation.

"Yes, I believe you're right," said Bob, as he rose from his seat and surveyed the sight before him. "The saint probably heard your grumbling, and is pouring coals of fire on your head."

"If he'd put them at my feet, I'd be more grateful," replied Jock, who was shivering with the cold. "I think I'd like even Mrs. Ethan's feather bed just at the present moment."

"Some people never can be satisfied. First they want to save their unprofitable

lives from the fury of the raging storm, and when that's been done for them, they even cry for a regular 'live' geese feather bed. Now for my part, I'm glad to be here. This is one of the nights you read about, and we'll remember it to our dying day."

"I think we shall," murmured Jock, whose teeth were now chattering in a manner that greatly distressed his more robust friend.

"I say, Jock," said Bob at last, "I'm cold, too. Let's try the lamb act."

"The lamb act? What do you mean?"

"Why, they huddle together to keep warm in a storm. I've even seen the colts on the farms over there at the Corners get close together and turn their backs to the wind. Now I'm cold and you are colder, so just move that seat of yours up a little closer to mine and perhaps we'll be a bit warmer."

Jock did as he was bidden, apparently not perceiving the motive in his friend's heart, and soon with his head against Bob's shoulder was asleep.

He, of course, did not know that Bob removed his own coat and wrapped his companion about with it, nor that Bob

seldom closed his eyes. He was more anxious for Jock than he had dared disclose, and well knew the fears which would have possessed his mother's heart had she known the plight of her boy. So Bob, strong and rugged himself, and unmindful of the chill of the night, watched over his friend and waited patiently for the morning light to come.

When two hours had elapsed, the wind had died away, and soon after the tumbling waters of the river became calmer. Still Bob held to his position, and the exhausted Jock slept on, his head all the time pillowed on the shoulder of the sturdy lad by his side.

Perhaps Bob himself at last became drowsy, or his eyes for the moment had closed. At all events, he suddenly opened them, and his first thought was that the morning had come. There was a light in the sky, and for a moment he thought the sun had risen. And yet the light seemed unnatural, and the surrounding darkness was still intense in places. Then there was borne in upon his ears the harsh, discordant shrieks of the whistles of the river steamers; but they were not given in the

sharp, short manner in which they ordinarily declared the approach of the boats, for they were long continued and without any intervals.

Speedily convinced that something was wrong, Bob roused his sleeping comrade, and said, "Wake up, Jock! wake up! I think the river's on fire!"

"Wha-a-t!" exclaimed Jock, sitting quickly erect and staring stupidly about him, for the moment unable to understand where he was or what his friend had said.

"Wake up! come on!" exclaimed Bob, leaping to his feet as he spoke, and starting swiftly across the island.

Jock was wide awake now, and as he started after Bob there was no doubt as to the cause of the disturbance. From the head of the bay a great light was streaming toward the sky, causing the islands and trees and cottages to assume fantastic shapes. There could be no doubt, now, that some large building was burning, and both boys hastily concluded that it must be some hotel on fire, perhaps the very one to which they themselves had recently gone for their letters. The suggestion caused Jock to clap his hand upon

his pocket to satisfy himself that the letters in question were still safe, though he had as yet been unable to read them, and then he increased his speed to enable him to keep up with Bob, who was running as if he were on the college track.

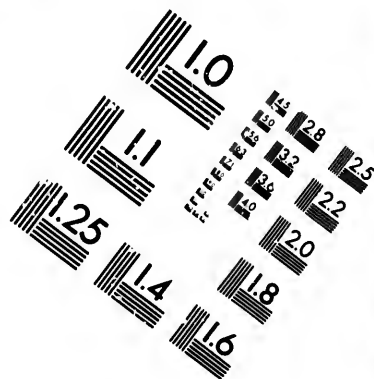
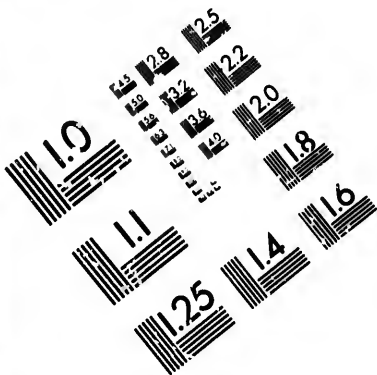
As soon as they arrived at the shore, they could see that boats were coming across the water from many directions, and all were moving toward the place from which the flames were rising.

"Give 'em a hail! Jock, give 'em a hail! Perhaps we can make some one stop and take us on board."

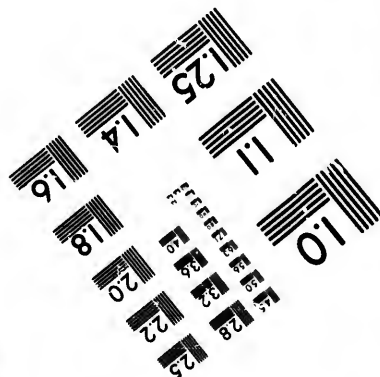
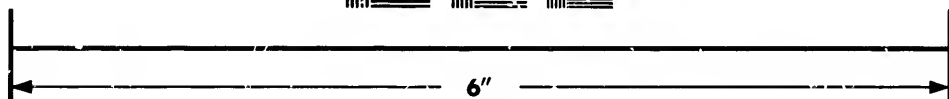
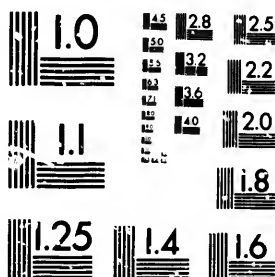
The shout of the boys was heard in the nearest boat, and an answering shout came back, but the men did not stop for them. Perhaps they thought the cry was only for them to hasten, for at all events they speedily disappeared.

Meanwhile the flames leaped higher and higher, and flying sparks and burning embers were borne far out over the river. Occasionally the far-away shouts of men could be heard, and it was evident that from miles along the St. Lawrence the people had assembled at the place where the great fire was blazing.





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The impatience of the two boys on the island was increasing. Despite all their efforts, they had not succeeded in causing any one to heed their calls. Skiffs came so close to the place where they were standing that they could almost see the faces of the men on board, but all passed and joined the crowd that had been summoned by the fire.

"We're as badly off as ever," said Jock. "Can't we do something, Bob?"

"We can stay here; that seems to be about all we can do."

"Hark! what's that?" exclaimed Jock, excitedly.

From the distance had come the faint echo of a great cry, as if the assembled people had been moved by one impulse, and then a silence had followed, long and intense. Something of an unusual character had occurred, but what it was neither Jock nor Bob could conjecture.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOATMAN'S HEROISM.

THE passing skiffs had by this time disappeared from sight, and no more came to take their places, for the fire had now drawn all the people of the region from their homes. The impatience of the two castaways found nothing to relieve it, and at last concluding that no help was to be had before the blaze had either been put out, or the building had burned to the ground, they abandoned themselves to their waiting.

From time to time the faint shouts of the distant men could be heard, and there were moments when showers of sparks rose upon the night wind and were borne far out over the river; then the blaze would apparently die down, though the heavy red glare still continued.

Both Bob and Jock remained standing on the shore, gazing at the glow, and bewail-

ing their own fate in being compelled to remain on the island. Their clothing was still damp and heavy; and as the wind was chill, Bob, at last recalled to the necessity of doing something themselves, said abruptly:—

“This will never do, Jock, you’ll catch your death cold here if we don’t do something to start up your circulation; come on, and we’ll keep moving, anyway. We can’t help put out that fire over there, whatever it is, but we can keep up a little heat inside. Somehow, things don’t seem to be very evenly divided in this world. Over there, they’re having too much fire; and here, we’re having too little. If we could only divide, we’d all of us be better off. Come on!”

Thus bidden, Jock turned and followed his friend, and together up and down the shore they ran slowly until warmth had returned and the damp chill was gone. Meanwhile, the far-away fire was evidently dying down. The glow in the sky was duller, and the blazing sparks and embers were no longer carried in the wind. Several hours had slowly passed, and just as the first faint streaks of the dawn

appeared, the boys perceived some of the skiffs returning. They were, however, too far away to be hailed, and the prospect of deliverance appeared no brighter. Suddenly Bob exclaimed, as he perceived a skiff in which four men were seated coming nearer than had any of the others: "That's our boat, Jock. That's Ethan and Jed and the boys; yell over, you freshman, and let's see if we can't make them hear us."

Their united shout was sent over the water, and it was evident, too, that it had been heard, for the occupants of the boat turned their heads and saw the boys on the shore. The skiff was not stopped, nor the direction changed, and almost in despair Jock said: "Give the college yell, Bob. Perhaps that'll make them pay some attention to us."

As the college cry was sent forth, the skiff was suddenly seen to stop, and a moment afterward with increased speed it was rapidly approaching the spot where the boys were waiting. An answering shout clearly indicated that Bert and Ben were on board, and as the boat came nearer the island, they could both plainly be seen.

It was not long before the boat grounded ;

and as Ben leaped ashore, he shouted: "This is where you fellows were, is it? Well, I must say you deserve to be left here. You don't know what a scare you've given us. Why didn't you come back? What are you staying here for, anyway?"

"We didn't have very much to say as to that," said Jock, soberly. "It's a case of the office seeking the man, not the man the office, I can assure you."

As Ben looked somewhat bewildered, Jock continued: "You see, Ben, we lost our boat last night, and as this island seemed to be a better place than any we could find, we put up here for the night."

In a few words the story of their mishap was told, and when Jock ceased, Ethan called out: "Well, I'm glad you're here, boys. I was scared last night the minute ye started; but these boys said you'd put up at the hotel when ye found out what kind of wind ye'd have to pull against, an' so I tried to be content. But I haven't had a minute's peace since ye left the house-boat; an' when ye didn't come, an' didn't come, I jest tried to b'lieve ye'd done what the boys said you'd do. But when we found out that the hotel was afire, I was scared more'n ever."

“What! was it the hotel that burned?” inquired Bob, quickly.

“Ye'd 'a' thought so if ye'd been there. Burned jest like tinder, that's what it did. I expected o' course I'd find ye there, but we didn't. No, sir. Ye wasn't there,” he added reproachfully.

“You weren't any more sorry about it than we were,” said Jock, soberly.

“Well, we looked all 'round for ye,” resumed Ethan, “an' when at last we couldn't find hide nor hair, we started for home, hopin' ye'd got back there. But ye hadn't, course ye hadn't. Ye say your skiff's gone?”

“Yes.”

“Mebbe we'll find it sometime. It'll drift deown the river an' likely fetch up agin' some island or other. Ye needn't give up hope o' findin' it, boys, leastwise yet awhile.”

“I'm so glad to see you, Ethan, I don't care anything about the skiff,” replied Jock, lightly. “It's been a great night on the old river, and one we'll all of us remember.”

“Likely's not. Likely's not. Neow heow'll we get ye back to the house-boat?”

“We’ll stay here,” exclaimed Ben, quickly, “and two of you come back for us.”

It was finally arranged that Ben and Bob should remain on the island, and that Jock should go back with the boatmen, and a brief time afterward the skiff disappeared around one of the projections of the islands on the opposite side of the bay.

Left to themselves, Ben began to describe the scenes at the fire, and at once found an interested listener in his companion.

“We were frightened, Bob, when you didn’t come back, as Ethan said, and though we didn’t say much, we sat up, and waited for you. It was a terrible wind, and one wouldn’t have believed that this peaceful river could ever have presented such a sight as it did. Why, right there in the cove the waves were driven in so that lots of them just washed right across the deck, and the house-boat rolled and pitched as if it had been out on the ocean. Jed and Bert went up the shore to watch for you, and Ethan and I stayed there by the boat. Two or three times we thought we heard you calling, and once Ethan put out in the skiff; but he soon came back, for it didn’t

seem possible for any boat to live in such a gale as was blowing then.

“ We kept telling Ethan and Jed that you wouldn't try to come back, but would stay at the hotel till morning; but we were talking as much to keep up our own courage as we were to soothe Ethan's troubled breast, and of course we did have a feeling that you wouldn't try to come back, though knowing you as we did, we were afraid you'd try it.

“ Well, we stood to our places till almost midnight, and every few minutes either Jed or Bert would come back to find out whether you'd come home or not. The wind had died away somewhat, and the river was a good deal calmer by that time; but still we kept up our watch.

“ Along about midnight we saw the sky begin to glow, and it wasn't long before we knew there was a big fire of some kind over this way. Ethan and Jed were almost beside themselves when the fire was discovered, and for a while we didn't know just what to do. We didn't want to leave the house-boat, for fear that you might come back; but at last we decided that even if you were all right, and should start at that

time of night, you'd go back when the fire broke out, so at last we all decided to go in the skiff, for we were almost as anxious to get a sight of you as we were of the fire.

"Almost?" inquired Bob, quizzically.

"Oh, well, you know what I mean. We wanted to make sure that you were safe, you see, and so it wasn't much of a trial for us to agree to go. That was a terrible fire, though, Bob. I've seen a fire in the city lots of times, of course, but I never saw anything like that."

"Was it the hotel at the Park?"

"No; it was the little one on the island — I've forgotten the name of it, but the hotel almost covered the whole island. There was a little space left on one side, and there was a big tree there, as you may remember, and if it hadn't been for that I don't know what would have happened. A good many would have been burned up, and Jed wouldn't have had his chance to cover himself with glory as he did."

"Jed! Why, what did he do?"

"He covered himself with glory, as I told you. The hotel wasn't much more than a fire-trap — a regular pine box, you

know. Well, some of the boarders — and it's lucky there weren't very many there, I can tell you — were up in the second and third stories, and every way of escape was cut off. If I live to be as old as Ethan's wife's cousin, I'll never forget the sight of those women and children at those windows. Even the crowd — and there was a crowd, too, though I haven't the slightest idea where it came from, for one wouldn't believe there were as many people on the whole of the St. Lawrence as showed up there — even the crowd held its breath, and some of them kept calling out for somebody to do something.

“A few of the boarders had dropped from the second story, but there was a woman and a little child up in one of the rooms on the third floor, and they seemed to be just paralyzed. I thought one time she was going to throw the child and perhaps herself out of the window, but she didn't. Well, as I was telling you, there was a tall tree on that side of the hotel, and it came well up to the room where this woman and the child were, only it was too far out for her to jump into it, so that it might almost as well have been in Kings-

ton for all the good it did her. But Jed and two men got a long rope — there weren't any ladders to speak of there — and climbed the tree. Jed had the rope tied under his arms, and then — you see, he was a little higher than the window — he had the men push him out. He swung back and forth up there for a while, the men all the time pushing and yet holding on to the rope, which was paid out over one of the branches, and for a while it didn't seem possible that he'd ever get to the window. Two or three times he'd almost make it, but his hands would slip, and off he'd go again. But he never gave up, and though 'twas middling warm work, I think, and the flames roared like an express train, he kept at it. The wind was driving the flames and smoke the other way, or he never could have done anything at all; but at last he got a grip on the window-sill, and held on. When he climbed into the room and disappeared from sight, the crowd below groaned as if it was one man. It's wonderful, the shout or the cry of a crowd; it always seems to me like that of one great giant.

“When Jed came to the window again,

he had both the woman and the child with him. He fixed the rope around all three of them, and held each of them with one arm, and then, after calling to the men in the tree, he just let himself go.

“For a minute it didn't seem as if the men could hold on to the rope, and it was a pretty good-sized load, with Jed and the other two, as you may well believe. I think they must have had a pretty good bump when they struck the branches of the tree, and I know they were pretty badly scratched and bruised; but Jed used his feet and body and head as a buffer, and pretty soon all three of them were pulled in. And when at last they were let down to the ground, and the woman and her child were taken over to the other hotel in a boat, such a shout and cheer went up from the crowd as I never in all my life heard before. It beat the yell we gave on Weston Field when the last Amherst man was out the other day.”

“Yes, I could hear it over here,” said Bob. “And you say Jed was the hero of the hour?”

“He was that! I tell you, he beats your Frontenac and Cartier and all your

old heroes all to pieces! But I don't suppose any one will ever write him up, and so his name will never go down to posterity as it deserves. But, I tell you, Jed Bates was a hero. And if you could see the condition of his face and hands, you'd think he'd been through a sawmill or a threshing-machine, or a college rush," he added solemnly.

"Many a hero is born to blush unseen," said Bob. "If that isn't a correct quotation, it ought to be. I — What's wrong?" he added quickly.

Not far away the skiff could be seen swiftly approaching. Bert was rowing, and it was evident from his exertions that something extraordinary had occurred. Both boys ran quickly toward the spot where he was about to land, and the very first word Bert spoke was one that caused the exciting events of the night, and even the heroism of Jed, the boatman, to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEARCH.

"THE old tub's gone, boys!" exclaimed Bert, as he leaped ashore.

"Gone? gone? What 'old tub'? What do you mean?" said Ben.

"Just what I say. When we came back and didn't find the house-boat where we left it, my first thought was that we'd come to the wrong spot, for these coves and bays get me all mixed up, and I can't tell one from another. But Ethan couldn't be fooled, and Jed was as positive as he that he had come to the right spot."

"I don't understand it," said Bob. "Did some one take it away?"

"No. It worked loose. You see the wind struck it hard, and as the river was rough, it kept our floating palace working at her moorings, and at last she got free. The stakes were all right, but the ropes, or cables, or whatever you call them, were gone. Ditto the house-boat."

“Of course you haven’t any idea when she departed?” suggested Ben.

“Not the slightest, though it must have been while we were at the fire.”

“And you couldn’t see anything of her anywhere?”

“Not a glimpse.”

“Well, what’s to be done?”

“Ethan and Jock have suggested that we — that is, all three of us — go on to the Park and see if we can’t charter some yacht. Ethan said it would be a good idea for us to get some breakfast there before we came back, and bring them some, too, seeing that the kitchen and dining room took their departure along with the house-boat.”

“I think we’d better start right away, then,” said Bob. “We’ve lost a skiff, and now the house-boat has gone, too; and if we don’t make haste, we’ll find the island itself leaving us, to say nothing of the river.”

“The river goes, anyway,” suggested Ben, soberly.

The boys laughed and hastily took their seats in the skiff, with Bob at the oars. In a brief time they were out in the main channel, and soon afterward approached the dock of the place they were seeking.

When they discovered a little steam yacht there, which they chartered for the day, and then hastily made their way to the hotel, where they ordered a breakfast to which they did ample justice, we may be sure.

As soon as this duty had been attended to, they returned to the dock, followed by a colored man with baskets in his hands, which, if one might judge by their capacity, contained provisions that would be ample for more than one day; and a few minutes afterward, with the skiff in tow, they were speeding away toward the place in Eel Bay where their friends were waiting for them.

When half an hour later they approached the spot, a shout from Jock greeted them, and, without attempting to run the yacht close inshore, Bob took the skiff, and soon had placed his three recent companions on board. Immediately the yacht was headed down the river, and while the hungry men fell upon the provisions which the boys had brought with them, the conversation was not suffered to flag. The night had been an exciting one, and there had been no opportunity to talk over the stirring events. A huge scratch

on Jed's face, and the fact that both his hands were wrapped in cloths, were silent witnesses to the part the boatman had taken in the rescue of the woman and her child from the burning hotel.

Again the story was told, and many were the questions to be asked and answered. Jed had not much to say, but the expression upon his face was one that, under other circumstances, would have highly delighted the boys. The consciousness of superior merit was now very apparent, and, though Ethan made no attempt to belittle the heroic action of his comrade, it was evident that he was somewhat restive under the lavish praise that was bestowed upon his rival.

"'Twasn't no such great shucks, after all," Ethan declared at last, no longer able to remain silent. Now that the danger had been safely passed, and Jed was safe, as well as the people he had rescued, he was inclined to attempt to divert some of the attention into its more proper channel, which in the mind of the boatman was, more properly speaking, his own.

"I'm not attemptin' to belittle Jed Bates," he continued; "but there's lots o' men could have done the same thing."

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"But they didn't," suggested Bert, gravely.
"Jed was the only one to do anything."

"I'm not disputin' that," said Ethan, sharply. "All I'm a sayin' is that there's lots o' others could have done the same thing if they'd tried."

"But they didn't try," said Bert, who it is to be feared, took great delight in stirring up the feelings of the worthy boatman.

"I'm not disputin' that, I tell ye," responded Ethan, still more sharply. "All I'm a sayin' is that others could 'a' done it, too. Jed's all right, — I'm not tryin' to *de*-tract from that, — but he isn't the only man on the river that could 'a' done what he did."

"But they didn't, and Jed did," said Bert. "My father is always telling me that the difference between men who succeed and those who fail in life is not in the opportunities they have. Every man has a chance, only some don't see that it is a chance, and so let it go till it's too late to seize it."

"Shucks!" snorted Ethan, indignantly. "That's the most 'tarnal nonsense a man ever talked yet. Neow there's Jock Cope's pa an' me. We was in the same school, and set together on the same bench. Jest

see heow it's come eout, will ye? Here's Jock Cope's pa jest a rollin' in wealth. His ma keeps three or four hired girls, and his pa don't have to go deown to his store afore nine o'clock in the mornin'. Then jest look at me. Here I am a toilin' an' a toilin', havin' to earn my bread by the sweat o' my brow. An' yet we started jest the same. I tell ye the difference between men is luck, jest luck, an' that's all there is about it."

"Why didn't you go off down to the city, too, when my father did?" inquired Jock, who was quick to respond when his father was brought into question.

"Why didn't I go? Why didn't I go?" retorted Ethan, sharply. "Why, I didn't go jest because I didn't care to go. I didn't have nobody to push me."

"Did my father?" said Jock.

"No, I dunno as he did, that is, nobody in particular; but then he jest happened to strike it."

"Yes, he struck it as office boy at three dollars a week. I've often heard him tell the story," said Jock, warmly. "He says he wouldn't have me go through it as he did for all the money in America. It was

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a terrible time. He felt like giving up lots of times, but he didn't. He just held right on and went right straight through, and when he was promoted, every time it was because he had worked harder than some one else, and could do that work better than any one else did."

"That's jest his brag," retorted Ethan. "I tell ye, I knew Jock Cope long afore you did, and he isn't any smarter'n lots o' men raised at the Corners. He had luck, that's what he had. I never had no luck myself, that is, not much to speak of."

There was a bright red spot on each of young Jock's cheeks, and he was about to utter an angry retort when he felt Bob's hand placed on his and restrained himself. Bob, however, took up the cudgel; but it was difficult to be angry with him, he spoke so good-naturedly, and even Ethan himself soon felt his influence.

"It's every man to his work, isn't it, Ethan?" said Bob. "Now Mr. Cope didn't like to stay on the old place, and you didn't want to leave it. Isn't that about it? You could have gone, too, if you'd wanted to."

"Of course I could," responded the boatman, somewhat mollified. "But I didn't

b'lieve the game was worth the candle. Besides, my father left me the old home, and I jest couldn't bear to see it go eout o' the family."

"You ought not to blame my father, then, because he went and succeeded," interrupted Jock. "You did what you wanted to, and so did he."

"I'm not a blamin' him," replied Ethan. "All I'm a sayin' is that he jest had good luck an' that's all there is to it. Neow I was up to the school when Bob here had the speakin' pieces the last day. Ye see I'm one o' the trustees," he added with pride. "Well, one o' the boys got up an' he spoke a piece abeout Paul the Dear's ride."

"Whose ride?" said Ben, sharply.

"Paul the Dear. An' the fellow spoke it first-rate, too. He flung eout his arms an' hollered good, an' went on to tell heow this man — Paul the Dear — got a lantern an' jumped on the back o' his hoss, an' went a yellin' along the road that the red-coats was a comin'. It most made me feel as if I wanted to go home an' get my old shot-gun an' go eout an' join the men, too."

"You mean Paul Revere, don't you?"

inquied Bert, in such a solemn manner that Ben made a rush for the rail, where he stood gazing out over the river as if he suddenly had discovered some sight of special interest on the far-away shores.

"Mebbe that was his name," said Ethan, "though it sounded to me jest as if 'twas Paul the Dear. Well, as I was a sayin', the boy spoke it first-rate. But I was a thinkin' all the time that 'twasn't any such great shucks after all, for I b'lieve there was hundreds o' men what could have grabbed their lanterns and gone ridin' like Jehu 'long the road and yelled eout that the Britishers was comin', if they'd tried real hard. Yes, sir; there was hundreds on 'em, in my 'pinion."

"What made the difference in Paul Revere's case?" asked Bob.

"He jest had somebody what writ it up for him. Now, that's what I call luck. Paul the Dear had the luck to find somebody to tell abeout what he did. That's all the difference the' is, boys, between folks. Some has luck, an' some hasn't."

"And so you think that Mr. Cope and Jed here just had the good luck to do

what they've done, do you, Ethan?" inquired Bert.

"Yes, sir; that's all 'twas."

"Well, the tree was there and the rope was there, and lots of men were there at the fire. Why didn't some one else happen to get the woman and her child out?" said Bert.

"'Cause they didn't happen to think on it, that's all."

"But they had the same chance, didn't they?"

"They didn't jest happen to think on it, I tell ye," said Ethan, sharply.

"That is, they all had the same chance, but only Jed and the other two men made use of it, you mean?" said Bert.

"That's one way o' puttin' it."

"Well, my father says that's just the difference between men. The chances come along to all, and only a few have sense enough to see that it is a real opportunity. That's the reason he sent me to college, just because he wanted my great intellect trained, so that when I saw a good thing I'd have sense enough to know that it *was* a good thing."

"Shucks! It's jest luck, an' that's all the' is to it."

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"There's one thing Ethan knows better than any of us," suggested Bob, "and that's how to find the house-boat."

"Better get Bert here to tell ye. He's havin' his intellect trained, an' prob'ly he knows more'n I do about it," replied Ethan, disdainfully, glancing keenly over the river as he spoke.

"I think it probably went down the river," said Bert, promptly.

"Jinks! I wish I could 'a' had the luck to go to college," said Ethan, scornfully. "It takes a mighty big intellect to think o' that. Neow prob'ly the ordinary man, after thinkin' over the matter a spell, would 'a' concluded that that 'ere house-boat had either gone up the stream, or had crawled up the bank an' hid in the bushes, or mebber had jumped up in the clouds, an' would come deown to earth again 'long with the next rainfall. It's a great thing to have a trained intellect, I'm tellin' ye. It's only the educated man what could think eout that 'ere problem."

Ethan's good-nature was evidently restored, and so the entire party, including Bert, laughed heartily at his words. The yacht, however, by this time was near a

dock on one of the islands, and at the boatman's suggestion he was permitted to land. He made his way to the little hotel near by, and in a few minutes returned to the yacht. His face betrayed the fact that he had secured some information of interest to all, and in response to the eager question of Jock he said: —

“Yes, they seen it, boys. It came a tumblin' an' a rollin' 'long here abeout two hours ago. They say as how a party from Canada went aboard, and took the house-boat along with 'em. The folks in the hotel thought as heow it belonged to 'em, so they kept still an' said nothin'.”

“Canada!” exclaimed the boys together.

“That's what I said, and that's where we're goin'.”

At the word of the boatman the yacht was headed for the Canadian shore, and with increasing speed started swiftly across the broad bay.

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CHAPTER XVI.

IN CANADIAN WATERS.

THE yacht was soon in the midst of the Canadian islands, which for beauty and picturesqueness far surpassed those upon the opposite side of the great river. Some of these islands were bold and rocky, and others were soft and fertile. Farm-houses were to be seen here and there, and in places the channel ran so close to the shores that the boys might easily have leaped across the narrow water intervening.

The thought of regaining the lost house-boat, however, banished from their minds even the impressions which the wooded islands and swift-flowing waters under other circumstances would readily have produced. The most of those on board were keeping a careful lookout, hoping all the time to discover the whereabouts of the missing craft. Conversation had ceased

for the most part, and Jed maintained the silence which he had seldom broken since they had set forth on their quest. His bandaged hands perhaps explained his reluctance to speak, but if his young companions were expecting him to have no part in the experiences of the day, they were soon to be disabused, for the boatman was merely biding his time.

Jock had been reading the letters he had received the preceding evening, and had withdrawn from his comrades to a more secluded spot aft, but as he completed his by no means unpleasant task, he quickly rose from his seat, and rejoining his friends said, "I say, fellows, I've had a letter from the Clarkes."

"Which one — pater, mater, or filia?" inquired Bert, quizzically.

"It's from Mrs. Clarke. They're already in their summer home at 'The Rocks,' and I thought that fact might be of interest to you, especially to Ben."

"You're not mistaken, my brilliant young friend," replied Ben, with a solemn air. "I am interested in the Clarkes; but then, in that particular, I don't know that I differ from the rest of you. The main

point is, that the Clarkes are interested in me."

"Just listen to that, will you, fellows?" exclaimed Bert, as he gave his room-mate a push that almost upset the chair on which Ben was seated.

"I don't see why they shouldn't be interested in him," said Bob. "He certainly had the most unique manner of presenting himself before the family I ever heard of.¹ I say, Ben, did the girls ever see you in dry clothing?"

"Sometimes," replied Ben. "But, then, there's still one advantage I have over you fellows. It's true I was upset in my canoe several times, but you didn't even have that chance. The girls would rather see me upset than you all in your dress suits."

"I haven't a doubt as to that," responded Bert. "I tell you, fellows, it was the most affecting sight I ever saw. Just think of Ben tipping over his canoe right before the young ladies, and waving those long legs of his like a signal of distress in the air before he disappeared beneath the cold waters of the mighty St. Lawrence. It made even the rocks their silence break.

¹"Camping on the St. Lawrence."

Are the same girls there that were with them last summer, Jock?"

"I don't know," replied Jock. "Mrs. Clarke doesn't say. She simply writes that they have company, and are planning for a picnic next Wednesday, and invites us to join them. Shall we do it?"

"Do it? Do it?" exclaimed Ben. "Well, I should say so! But, Jock, how'll you get word to them? Post-offices don't seem to be very thick in this region."

The yacht was now moving through one of the larger open spaces of the river, and the shores of the adjacent islands were farther distant than those which they had recently passed. There were cottages at infrequent intervals along the banks, but the primeval wildness of the region had been but slightly modified by the hand of man. The beauty of the scenery was of a more rugged character, and those who had built their summer homes in the vicinity were indeed near to nature's heart.

Jed now approached the party, and pointing to a party of boys who could be seen not far in advance of them, fishing from skiffs, he said, "We'll hail those fellows and find out if they've seen anything of

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our wandering house-boat, but I don't know as it'll do any good."

"They can tell us, anyway, whether they've seen it or not," said Jock.

"They *can*, fast enough, but whether they *will* or not is another question."

"I don't see what you mean," said Jock.

"Why, these Canadian fellows don't love the 'States,' as they call 'em, over much, and 'twould be just like 'em to send us off on the wrong tack."

"I hardly think they'll do that," said Jock, laughingly. "They seem to be very peaceable, and, as far as I have observed, they seem to be very much like us, only a little more so."

"Sho! Don't you believe it! Why, would you believe it, the other day one fellow said to me as how we had no right to call our side o' the river the 'American' side at all. Jest think o' that, will ye?"

"I should think the fellow was about right," said Bob; "I never could understand why we always did that very thing. It isn't any more America on one side of the river than it is on the other."

"Git ecut!" snorted Jed. "You're as bad as the Canucks."

“What would you call the Canadian side?” inquired Ben.

“I don’t care nothin’ about what ye call their side. What I’m a talkin’ about is that our side o’ the river is the American side.”

“How do you make that out?” said Ben.

“Well, it’s the United States of America, on our side, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” answered Ben.

“Well, that’s the American side, then, isn’t it?”

“Yes, and so is the other. Canada is a part of North America as much as the United States is,” replied Ben.

“In a way that may be trew,” said Jed, “but one side o’ the river is the Canadian and t’other is the American. You can’t drive that notion eout o’ my head, an’ I know what I’m a talkin’ about, too. An’ that isn’t all there is to it, either. Neow there’s a tariff on all the stuff the Canadians bring into our country, but those fellows come over here an’ they get a lot o’ the people from the hotels on the American side to take eout a fishin’. That’s no fair, either.”

“Jed, do you ever take any of your par-

ties fishing in the Canadian waters?" inquired Bob, slowly.

"Course I do," replied the boatman; "the fishin' is a sight better than it is in the American waters."

"Don't you think it is just as fair for their boatmen to come over here on our side, as it is for our boatmen to take parties over into their waters?"

"No, I don't!" said Jed, decidedly, utterly failing to see the point Bob had presented. "I b'lieve in protectin' American things. Neow there's eggs."

"Is the American hen protected?" said Bob.

"Course."

"I hope she appreciates it."

"What I'm a sayin' is, that it isn't fair to protect a hen an' then let all the boatmen from Canada come over on our side."

"Not even if our boatmen go over there?"

"That hasn't anything to do with it. That's another matter entirely."

"So I see."

"Then there's another matter," said Jed, solemnly, his voice dropping lower in his desire to be more impressive.

"What's that?" inquired Bob.

"The War o' 1812 has got to be fit over again."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do mean it. It's jest got to be fit over again."

"Why? What makes you think so?"

"'Cause there's lots o' folks in Canada what don't know they was licked then. Why, do you know, I heard a man say t'other day (he was from Canada, o' course) that the Americans didn't whip in the battle o' Lundy's Lane. What d'ye think o' that?" he asked triumphantly, as if he had given expression to a profound truth.

"It always has been a disputed point," said Bob.

"I guess the' isn't any disputin' on the American side."

"Yes, some writers call it a drawn battle."

"Git eout! I don't b'lieve no such nonsense!" replied Jed, indignantly. "That War o' 1812 has jest got to be fit all over again."

"When we're such good friends now?"

"Yes, sir! They've just got to own up that they was whipped."

"That's something a little difficult to teach the people on either side of the river, I'm thinking," said Bob. "People with Anglo-Saxon blood in their veins somehow never seem to be able to find out just when they are beaten, — if they ever are. That's the reason why they are the foremost people in the world to-day, wherever they're found. They just don't know how to give up."

The discussion was not continued, however, as the yacht had now approached the place where the young fishermen had been discovered; and as the steam was shut off so that the vessel was carried forward only by the current, Jed shouted, —

"Have you boys seen a house-boat drift-in' by here?"

"Seen a *what?*" replied one of the boys.

"Seen a house-boat."

"I never saw a house-boat anywhere," replied the boy, "so of course we haven't seen any here."

"Thank you!" called Jock, as the yacht resumed its way.

"There! Isn't it jest as I told ye?" exclaimed Jed, exultingly. "I told ye the Canadians was against us, an' neow ye can

see for yourselves that I knew what I was talkin' about."

"But they didn't even know what a house-boat was," protested Jeck, mildly. "How could they help us when they hadn't seen what we're looking for?"

"That doesn't make no difference," replied Jed, doggedly. "I knew ye wouldn't get help from any o' them. They're against us, every time."

The boatman's prejudice was too strong to admit of opposition, no matter how unreasonable he was; but as Ethan just at this time called to him, the argument, if argument it might be termed, was of necessity broken off.

The result of the conference of the two boatmen was that both agreed that it would be useless to go farther down the river in their quest; and accordingly the course of the yacht was changed, and the party started back on its way, threading its course in and out among the islands, and oftentimes approaching the main shore on the Canadian side. Several times parties of campers or fishermen were hailed, but not one had seen or heard anything of the missing house-boat.

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It was near midday by this time, and after eating what remained of the luncheon which had been brought on board, Jed advised a return, strongly affirming that the house-boat was lost, and never would be heard of more.

Ethan, however, was for continuing the search; and as Bob made reference to the fact that the present was a good time in which to display the quality of heart and mind to which he had recently called Jed's attention, that worthy was forced to acquiesce, though he shook his head wisely, and declared that all would soon be convinced that he knew whereof he spoke.

As the afternoon wore on, it began to seem as if Jed had indeed been correct in his opinion. Camp after camp was passed, but not a word had been heard of the missing house-boat. The sun was low in the western sky, and the slowly returning skiffs, which could be seen making their way across the water, proclaimed the fact that the night would soon come. Even the sturdy Ethan was convinced that the search for the present day must be abandoned, and he was about to suggest a return to the

hotel, when he and all the company were startled by a shout from Jock.

“There she is! She’s right over there in that little cove!”

Glancing quickly in the direction indicated by the exultant lad, all could see the outlines of the house-boat, though apparently it had been intentionally concealed behind some low cedars that grew along the shore.

Instantly the yacht started toward the place, but the sight of four or five men on the deck of the house-boat threatened to complicate matters, and present a new and unwelcome aspect to the problem.

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"WHAT YE DOIN' WITH OUR HOUSE-BOAT?" Page 205.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE NARRATIVE.

“WHAT ye doin’ with our house-boat?” called Jed, excitedly, as the yacht drew near the place they were seeking.

“Your house-boat?” responded one of the men, glumly. “How do we know it’s your’s any more than it’s ours? Just prove your right to it, will you?”

“It’s just as I told you,” remarked Jed in a lower tone to the boys. “Ye see they don’t mean to give it up at all.”

A brief conference, however, convinced the men that the party was indeed the one to whom the house-boat rightfully belonged; and despite the words of the boatman, it was at once evident that they were not planning to make any claim to ownership. They told how they had seen the strange craft swept toward them while they were fishing near the shore, and its peculiar antics, as well as the apparent absence of

any one on board, had induced them to make investigations of their own. When they had discovered that to all appearances it had been abandoned by its owners, and was being borne onward to certain destruction, they had not hesitated to take it in charge, and had towed it into the sheltered place where it had been discovered by its rightful owners.

They now were very willing to turn it over, and in response to Jock's invitation, decided to remain on board and share the evening meal with the party. A bill which Jock slipped into the hands of the one who appeared to be the leader assisted in strengthening the bond of peace, and preparations for supper were at once begun.

While Ethan was busy on board the house-boat, Jed, with one of the boys as a companion, took the skiff, and rowing to a point not far away, soon secured a sufficient number of fish for the evening meal; and not long afterward the entire party was seated on the deck, and shouts and laughter rang out over the river, as the table which the boatmen had spread was rapidly cleared of its provisions.

The yacht had before this time started for home, the pilot taking with him a letter which Jock had written accepting the invitation of Mrs. Clarke for the picnic on the following Wednesday, and the house-boat was to be left in the place where it then was, for several days. The region was a beautiful one; and as the following day was Sunday there would be nothing done then, so that all were resigned to the decision which had been made.

In many ways the place was an ideal one. High bluffs sheltered the house-boat on one side, and on another the thick growth of cedars kept off any wind which might arise from that direction. On the exposed side there was a fine view of the magnificent river, and the twinkling lights on the distant shore, as well as the light of the stars overhead, added much to the beauty of the summer evening. Despite the fact that one of the skiffs was lost, the recovery of the house-boat made all the boys in good spirits; and when at last the supper was eaten, and their visitors rose to depart, they all declared that the loss of their floating domicile had but added to the enjoyment of the day.

The recoverers of the house-boat soon took their skiffs and disappeared in the darkness, though the sound of their oars could be heard long after their boats could no longer be seen. The evening was a glorious one, and the sighing of the gentle breeze in the tree-tops and the lapping of the little waves against the side of the house-boat were like music.

The boatmen had looked well to the fastenings, and satisfied this time that there was no danger of the boat getting loose again, took their places on the deck, and lighting their pipes, listened to the boys as they laughed and sang, and seemed to share, in their quiet way, in the enjoyment of their younger companions.

“Why, isn’t this a good time for Bob to go on with his story of Frontenac?” suggested Jock. “I want to get that man and his work firmly fixed in my mind before the summer is ended.”

As they all, apparently at least, shared in Jock’s desire, Bob resumed his narrative.

“I was telling you about Frontenac and his trouble at Quebec, when I left off, I think. Well, his trouble at Quebec wasn’t to be mentioned along with that which he

had at Montreal. You see the count was one of these men who are determined to have their own way. He was a natural leader, but such a man always has enemies as well as friends, too. Frontenac was a handsome, daring, dashing man, gentle and as winning as a woman when he wanted to be, and as hard as flint when he felt that way, too. He'd gained a wonderful influence over the Indians, and probably there hadn't been a white man in the New World before who could do what he could with them. He always called them 'children,' whereas most of the others had referred to them as 'brothers'; and the red men seemed to fall right in with it, and to like it, too, though they probably would have rebelled if any other man had attempted the same thing.

"Frontenac's main trouble was with the Jesuits. Of course some of these were good men; but as a general thing they couldn't be trusted, — or that is what the count claimed, at all events. He believed that the Jesuits were trying to control everything. They had their friends in the court in France, and so kept themselves pretty well informed as to what was going

on each side of the ocean. But the real cause of the trouble, after all, was the trade in furs. The fort which Frontenac had had built up at the head of the river — it was built, as you know, where Kingston now stands — he had named ‘Frontenac,’ after himself; and as he was running the business in furs, with more or less an eye to his own gain, of course that fort gave him a tremendous advantage.

“There was a class of traders who ‘feared not the fort, neither regarded man’! They were outlaws, buccaneers, pirates, — anything and everything that was bad in the eyes of the Jesuits, — which probably meant that these fellows didn’t always bring their furs to the proper market, pay the royal duties as they ought, and let the Jesuits and their friends have their goods at a price sufficiently low to suit the purchasers.”

“They had no ‘bargain counters,’ so to speak,” suggested Ben, gravely.

“Exactly. Well, Frontenac, in a quiet way, stood in with these fellows, and that fact, as well as the jealousy of the Jesuits over the control of the reins of government, led to no end of trouble. Indeed, it was claimed that these men, with the con-

sent, and even with the knowledge of Frontenac, were not sending all of their furs to Montreal and Quebec, but that many of them found their way to New York, where the English were in control, and a more heinous crime than that, in those days, of course could not be conceived.

“The troubles at Montreal grew worse and worse. Frontenac would wait until a ship had started for France, and then he'd begin to stir up matters worse than ever; for he knew that his enemies wouldn't get word from the king by cable, and he'd have several months in which he'd be free to carry out his own designs, without let or hindrance from Louis. You mustn't imagine from all this that he wasn't true to the king, for in a way he was, probably a good deal more true than the scheming Jesuits were; but he'd come to New France, not only to look after the interests of Louis, but after his own as well. That was looked upon as the proper thing by all; and it's more than likely that the king and his secretary, Colbert, didn't really expect to get all the returns due them. And though the Jesuits of course made much of this in the complaints they kept sending to

their lawful sovereign, in reality they weren't any better in their own deals. It was a case of 'the pot calling the kettle black.'

"The king and Colbert kept writing to both sides, one sometimes sending a letter as smooth as oil, and the other as hard as flint. They cajoled and promised and threatened, but the quarrel became worse and worse, until at last there came a summons for Frontenac to give up his place and come back to France. It was a sorry day for New France when that occurred, and even the Jesuits themselves were soon to learn it, too; but Frontenac obeyed, and went back home. Probably his pockets were not as empty as they were when he had come, but in many ways he had been a very sterling man; and there was a very general impression left behind him that if trouble really came to New France, Frontenac was the one man in all the world who could meet it. He'd been over here about ten years, I think; so you can see he was no child when he went back home, for he was sixty-two years old."

"He was an old man, then," suggested Jed, gravely.

“Old? Old?” said Ethan, quickly. “Ye don’t call sixty-two old, do ye? Why, I’m most that myself, an’ I’m not old, I’d have ye ’ow.”

“I don’t think any one would call you an old man, Ethan,” said Jock. “You don’t handle an oar as if you were very feeble, anyway.”

“How old do you think a man must be, to be really old, Ethan?” said Ben.

“That depends. Some is older’n others,” replied the boatman.

“That’s so,” said Bert. “Why, Ethan, do you know that in New York there are some men who are actually born bald-headed? They are, for a fact.”

Ignoring the laugh which followed, Bob at once resumed his narrative.

“In place of Frontenac, Louis sent over here a man who was called La Barre, and with him, as ‘intendant,’ was another named Meules.”

“Mules!” exclaimed Ethan. “What under the canopy did they want o’ mules?”

“That was the man’s name,” said Bob. “Well, there’d been a big fire before they arrived, and it was a pretty desolate scene they looked upon after they landed. They

began to work, however, but La Barre wasn't fitted for the place. He was an experienced old officer, and had fought the English in the West Indies, but he found that a very different kind of work from dealing with the savages. The Jesuits were quite enthusiastic over him; but the very fact that he was weak enough to be a tool in their hands, showed that he wasn't strong enough to deal with the Indians and the problems they very soon presented, for they weren't long in finding out that they had a very different man from Frontenac to face.

“The Indian problem was now the worst of all. Away up the lakes the red men were supposed to be under the protection of the Frenchmen, but the Iroquois were not inclined to follow their example. They had been securing guns and ammunition from the English and Dutch at New York and Albany, and as they were a very brave and independent people, naturally they were not disposed to curry favor either with the English or French. They had some wonderful orators, too, as well as able generals, and the French were soon to find this out. When La Barre would send for the

Iroquois chiefs, and tell them to come to Montreal for a conference, the Indians would reply that the distance from Montreal to their villages wasn't really very much greater than it was from their villages to Montreal, and would suggest that if he really wished to see them, his best plan would be to come where they were.

"To complicate matters, the Iroquois were threatening to destroy the western Indians, and the latter naturally turned to the French for the protection which had been assured them. Many of the reckless and dissolute traders in furs at Montreal had returned after Frontenac had departed, and they, of course, didn't want the new governor to do anything which would in any way interfere with their business. And poor La Barre was all the time trying to be popular, and keep the peace with all. But he was a follower, and not a leader of men; and besides, he didn't have a very large force of soldiers to stand behind him.

"So he tried to do what all weak men do. He cajoled and threatened and promised, with the result that matters all the time became worse and worse. The Iroquois soon despised him, and paid so little

attention to what he said that even the rascally merchants and the Jesuits began to be afraid. Then, too, the man in charge of the English port at New York saw his chance, and began to curry favor with the savage Iroquois, and by every means in his power tried to win the Indians over to the English king, and have them renounce their allegiance to Louis.

“At last there came a time when the weak La Barre, this time influenced by the merchants and people at Montreal, — he was always trying to do what they told him to do, instead of doing what he himself thought he ought to do, — decided to take the field with his soldiers and teach the Iroquois a good lesson. He did teach them a lesson, though it was not exactly the one he intended; and he learned something, too, for himself, and it was ‘writ large,’ in letters of fire and blood.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOATMAN'S INTEREST.

“LA BARRE, as I said,” continued Bob, “was a weak man, and he was almost distracted by his troubles. It’s true that King Louis didn’t provide a very large force of regulars; but even what he had might have enabled him to do more if he had had the brains to use them as he ought to have done. The western Indians were mightily scared by the Iroquois, and were coming to believe that the French were no good.

“One thing that made matters worse was the permission that La Barre had given the Iroquois to plunder the boats and men of La Salle, — you know he was Frontenac’s right-hand man, — and the governor seemed to be entirely willing for those who had been friends of Frontenac to pay the price of their friendship. It’s true these men declared that a good many of the boats La Barre had had built and

charged up to the king were really for his own use in the fur trade; but little things like that mustn't be made too much of when we are abridging history.

“Well, the Iroquois used the governor's permission to plunder the possessions of La Salle and his friends, and as they were not always very discriminating, they happened to seize the cargoes of some of La Barre's own boats, or those of his friends, and then the mischief was to pay. Even the warmest supporters of the new governor declared that he must do something now. It's strange how much more eager people are when they feel that their own pockets are likely to suffer. So La Barre plucked up courage and boldly started in. He'd been writing the most tender letters to Louis, begging for more soldiers, all the time he'd been trying to cajole the Iroquois, who, as I said, were all the while laughing at him in their sleeves.”

“What kind of sleeves did the Iroquois Indians wear?” inquired Ben.

Ignoring the question, Bob continued: “La Barre started out from Montreal with his regulars, and was joined by the militia and friendly Indians of Canada, who were

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willing to help him, and was going to crush the Iroquois. They had canoes and flat-boats and various other boats, and at last made their way up the St. Lawrence, and stopped at Fort Frontenac. There were several hundred of the Indians with him now, and altogether his army must have presented a glorious sight. The regulars slept in huts, and the militia and Indians in wigwams or huts of bark; but the first thing they knew a fever broke out among the soldiers, and a good many died, and more were so sick that they were not good for anything.

"This didn't improve the prospects of La Barre's crushing the Iroquois, and, if you would believe it, he sent them a begging letter, asking them to meet him in a conference at the mouth of the Salmon River, or La Famine, as the French, even then, called the spot. His visions of a big fight were all gone."

"They call it The Famine to-day, — that is, some folks do," said Jed.

"Well, La Barre moved on to the place with some of his woe-begone soldiers, and a delegation of the Indians met him there. The governor put on airs, and talked big

to them about how he was going to punish them for robbing the canoes of his friends, and all that; but he couldn't fool the Iroquois, who were as smart as he was, and found out just exactly how all the matters stood. The leading warrior of the red men was a chief named Big Mouth, and if you'll read the speech he made (you can find it in the histories), you'll see that he was as good a speaker as Ben here, — and that's no small praise, I'd have you know. The upshot of the whole affair was, that after their pow-wow and large talk, La Barre was in a worse plight than ever, and that after a very flimsy truce had been patched up, he went back to Montreal, leaving his sick soldiers to float down the river as best they could. He tried to rouse the friendly Indians to go to war with the Iroquois, but they'd lost confidence in La Barre, and didn't feel like stirring up the terrible warriors of the Iroquois. Everybody was laughing at the poor weak 'popular' governor, and there's no knowing what the end would have been, if he hadn't just then been recalled by Louis, who explained that it was expecting too much of so old a man to handle the affairs in Canada, when they

were in such a state. So La Barre, like the famous soldier who with his men marched up the hill and then marched down again, sailed back over the ocean, a sadder, but it is to be feared, not a very much wiser man.

“The next man to be appointed was Denonville, who soon afterwards, with his wife and a part of his family, appeared in New France. He was a very devout man, and spent a good part of his time in reading good books and saying his prayers. That was all right, I suppose, but it's a good thing for a man to be diligent in business as well as fervent in spirit, and though Denonville was of course very popular with the Jesuits, he soon showed that he wasn't very much better than La Barre in his ability to deal with the Indians. You see, they'd begun to appreciate Frontenac now, and a good many were longing for him to be back in the place which he alone could fill.

“Denonville's greatest problem now was to match the English of New York, who were doing their very best to make the Iroquois friendly to them, and acknowledge that James II. was their lawful king. So

the governor of New York and the new governor of Canada had it pretty warm, and from the best I can learn it was about six in one and a half dozen in the other. I don't know that you'll be interested in all he did; and as I want to tell you about Frontenac, I'll try to condense all I have to say as to Denonville and his deeds."

"Do so, my friend. You can't condense it too much for me," said Ben.

"Keep still, Ben," said Jock. "We want to hear about this."

"Matters kept getting warmer and warmer. Denonville tried to hold the Indians, and the Englishman tried to get them. The quarrel was taken up on the other side of the sea, and Louis and James, who pretended to be great friends, and perhaps were, after a fashion, gave instructions to their governors to stop their foolishness; but it's pretty clear that each man understood that he was not to lose any of the territory his king claimed, and Denonville in particular was instructed to keep out the English, if they tried to push their way into the territory claimed by the French.

"The French governor had been begging hard for more troops, and some were sent

him, though not so many as he had asked for. Canada was really in a pretty bad way at the time; but Denonville decided to begin action, not only against the Indians, but against the English as well. So a little army was sent up north, and that did do considerable damage to the English trading-posts; but it only made the Englishmen at large still more furious, and the troubles thickened on every side.

“Just at this time each governor received a letter informing him that he must be more cautious, for James and Louis had patched it up again; but the words didn't really deceive any one, after all, for all knew just what was coming, and so both sides did their best to prepare for it. Denonville soon afterward mustered the militia, and decided with his men that he would do something to show that, in spite of his apparent weakness, he was still the ruler of Canada. I haven't time to give you all the details, but he took a few Iroquois prisoners, treacherously, too, on his way up the St. Lawrence. When at last he left Fort Frontenac with his four hundred —”

“Four hundred? Was there a ‘four hundred’ in those days?” inquired Bert.

“With his four hundred bateaux and canoes he crossed the foot of Lake Ontario and moved to the west, close to the southern shore. He was going out West, you see, to stir up the Indians who had once been friendly there, and get them to join him in giving the Iroquois a good lesson.

“Well, in a measure he succeeded, to make a long story short, and then he started for the main village of the Senecas — Babylon they called it, I believe. They had a great fight there, though the Senecas had heard of their coming, and had removed all who could not fight, and prepared an ambush for their advancing foes. In this they were, in a measure, successful; and though they were outnumbered, they did a good deal of damage to Denonville’s force, but couldn’t entirely stop them. His soldiers found a lot of hogs and green corn in or near the Indian village, and soon made themselves so sick with their feasting that they were good for nothing. However, the governor went on to Niagara, where he made what he called a fort, but he’d made one mistake. His Indian allies had told him that by simply destroying the Seneca village and not destroying the warriors he

had only broken into a hornet's nest, and had left the hornets free to put in their fine work."

"I thought it was a stinger the hornets used," said Jed.

"I think you're correct," laughed Bob, "and so would Denonville, if he could give us his opinion now. Well, the English and all the Iroquois were furious when they learned of Denonville's work, and trouble pretty soon came. Canada was weak; the trade in furs had been good for nothing for two years; the Indians who had been friendly were less so now; the soldiers were sick, and the little forts they were holding were a good deal more like hospitals than anything else.

"Matters came to a head when the Iroquois rallied their forces and friends, and started toward Montreal without sending word of their coming. They robbed the traders on their way, and drank their brandy, so that if the authorities in and about Montreal had bestirred themselves, they might have given the warriors a reception they would have remembered. But that was the very thing they didn't do. The Iroquois fell on the settlements near Montreal and defied the Frenchmen; killed,

burned, and pillaged to their heart's content, and stayed right there, if you will believe it, for two months or more.

“Finally, having gotten pretty much all they wanted, and frightened the people of Montreal so that ‘they were wild with terror,’ they took to their canoes, and started toward home. As they left, they gave a yell for every prisoner they had with them, and they had so many that they kept on yelling till they were out of sight. And all the time poor Denonville couldn't do a thing to them, and was afraid for his life. Perhaps it was a comfort to him when, just about that time, he was recalled to France, and so left the field of glory.

“This was Frontenac's chance, and though he was an old man, almost seventy years of age, King Louis appointed him again as governor of New France. The Jesuits and everybody were so frightened now, that they were not inclined to rebel very much, for a tomahawk and scalping knife are wonderful peacemakers, I've been told. Besides, the trouble with the English was becoming more serious, almost as serious as that with the Iroquois.

“You may remember that James II. had

left the English throne now, and William of Orange had appeared on the scene. Of course there were two parties in England, and the English colonies were also divided in their sentiments; but Louis of France never loved James as much as he did then. At least that's what he said, and he tried to prove it, though I'm inclined to think his main thought was of what he could get for France in the New World, on the basis of that friendship. At all events, he arranged it with Frontenac to fall on New York, and he wasn't to mince matters, either, when he did, though those people there who were of the same mind as the king religiously were to be spared. But storms prevented Frontenac from sailing for New York, so that fell through. Then he planned to go up Lake Champlain and attack Albany (or Orange), but that also didn't work. Then Frontenac, after sending word to the Iroquois that he, the great 'Onontio,' had come back, and would expect them to follow their 'father,'—he was to learn more about that later,—made his plans for three expeditions to leave Canada from three different places, and attack the English in their settlements.

“I’m going to tell you about these afterward, and they’re great stories, too, especially the one about the attack on Schenectady. All I want to call your attention to now, is the leader of the New England forces; for they were drawn into the fight too, as you soon shall hear, my children.

“This man was named Phips.”

“Good name, if he couldn’t get any better,” suggested Ben.

“There weren’t enough to go around, for he was one of twenty-six children, all having the same father and mother,” said Bob.

“Whew! What a show they must have made going to the shoemaker’s,” said Ben. “They advance like an army with banners.”

“He was a poor boy—”

“A poor boy, and born of poor but honest parents?” said Ben.

“Yes,” laughed Bob, “but he was an ambitious chap, and said he’d have one of the best houses in Boston before he died, and he did, too. He tried hard for a while, and only did fairly well; but at last he thought of something that would help him

out. He'd heard of a Spanish galleon wrecked somewhere off the West Indies about fifty years before this time, so Phips went to England with the story, and got some men to fit him out with a frigate, and he went off on a cruise for that sunken gold. One day his crew came to the quarter-deck where he was, every man with a cutlas in his hand, and wildly suggested that their captain should turn pirate with them. Phips, who was a powerful fighter, went at them with his fists, and pretty soon they all agreed that they'd only been joking, anyway, and wouldn't be pirates under any circumstances.

"They tried it again not long afterward, and changed their minds again, too, very suddenly; but Phips landed at Jamaica, and exchanged his crew for better men. But the frigate was leaking, and not good for much, so he put back to England. The Duke of Albemarle fitted him out once more, and on his second trip, if you'll believe it, he found the sunken galleon, and got out of her more than three hundred pounds sterling of gold, silver, and jewels.

"Once more this crew banded themselves

together to seize the whole thing, and Phips had to compromise by promising every man a share; and he kept his word, too, when he got back to England, though his own share was about sixteen thousand pounds. This was the man who was to lead the English forces in the New World in this new war. And that's enough for to-night."

"Oh, more, more!" pleaded Ben, in mock eagerness.

As Bob rose, he perceived that Jed was observing him with a strange intensity. Impressed by the sight, Bob was about to speak to him, but as the boatman signed for him to be silent and follow him into the woods on the shore, he obeyed, wondering what it was that had so strongly excited the man.

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CHAPTER XIX.

APPLIED HISTORY.

As no special attention was given to Bob and the boatman, their departure from the house-boat did not cause any of the company to follow them, and withdrawing to a secluded spot farther up the shore, they soon found themselves free from the interruptions or pranks of their companions.

It was of these that Bob was thinking; for Jed's efforts to be impressive and divert the attention of the other boys had been of a kind that under ordinary circumstances, or in broad daylight, would have assuredly produced the very opposite effects, and would have at once aroused the interest of all. As it was, however, Bob speedily perceived that they had not been followed, and seating himself on the top of a high rock, whose sides sloped down to the edge of the water, he began to break the stick in his hands into bits which he cast into the river.

His thoughts were in reality far more of the tale he had just been telling than of his own immediate surroundings; for it almost seemed to him that among the shadows on the river he could himself see the canoes of the savage Iroquois on their way to Montreal, or see the French soldiers as they slowly made their way up the river toward Fort Frontenac. Indeed, it was almost an unreal world, after all, and past and present were strangely mingled. There were a few clouds in the summer sky, and the moon, already rising, caused them to assume fantastic shapes; and now the young historian was certain that he could see the ghostly outlines of a Mohawk warrior in the heavens, and even make out the tomahawk he was carrying in his hands. Perhaps it was Big Mouth himself.

To add to the fantastic appearances and deepen the impression of the mingling of fact with fancy, and things unreal with those that were very real, the summer wind and the musical notes of the tree-toads united in their evening symphony. Doubtless the same music had been heard by those warriors of the far-away times, and even the magnetic Frontenac himself had

probably listened, in his own day, to the strains of a similar orchestra.

Occupied as Bob was with thoughts like these, he had almost forgotten the presence of the boatman; but Jed was not to be ignored. Taking his seat beside his young companion, he said, "I was powerfully interested in what you was a tellin' jest neow."

"It is a strange story," replied Bob, dreamily, for the spell had not yet departed from him; "and the trouble is, that I can't seem to shake it off, or decide just when the past ends and the present begins."

"It's the same way with me. He was a great chap, was that man."

"Yes; Frontenac was a bold and vigorous leader of men — I don't —"

"You're a talkin' about one man, an' I mean another," said Jed, sharply.

Bob looked up in surprise, but before he spoke, Jed said, "You're a talkin' about Frontenac, but I'm a thinkin' o' that other fellow. He must 'a' been a cute one."

"Who?"

"Pip."

"Pip? You mean Phips, don't you?"

"Mebbe that was his name, though I

thought ye said Pip. Anyway, it's the chap what went off deown to the West Indies an' found that gallon o' gold. I never knew afore as heow they measured gold by the gallon. 'Tisn't the way the' do in these parts."

"They don't anywhere," replied Bob, soberly, restraining his impulse to laugh. "It was a Spanish galleon — a ship — that was sunk, and the gold they found was on board of her."

"Oh, that's the way of it, was it?" said Jed, simply. "I thought 'twas a mighty queer way o' measurin' gold; but the gold was the main thing, anyway. Do ye know, it set me to thinkin'. It did, for a fact."

"It was a great story," replied Bob, "and if it wasn't given by some of the most reliable historians, one would almost be inclined to believe it was a yarn, like many of the others that have come down to us."

"That wasn't no yarn," said Jed, decidedly. "It set me to thinkin' o' somethin' lse. My grandfather used to tell me that somethin' like that once happened years an' years ago, deown here on the St. Lawrence, an' not very far from the very place where we now are."

"Is that so?"

Bob spoke slowly, and as if he had not really heard what his companion was saying.

As his thoughts were dwelling mainly upon the events he himself had been relating, perhaps his abstraction was not surprising. Jed, however, was apparently unmindful of it, and in a lower tone, and glancing cautiously about him as he spoke, to make sure that he was not overheard, he said:—

"Yes, sir, the's a story that years ago, away back in this French and Indian War you've been tellin' about (perhaps it may have been this very man, La Barre, you was speakin' of), a party of Frenchmen had been up to Frontenac (the fort I mean, o' course, and not the man), an' after makin' a mighty good deal in furs, put eout for Montreal again. They had a pile o' gold on board, — most a gallon, I'm thinkin', if the story is all right, — an' they had some cannon and guns, an' lots o' other weapons an' things. It seems when they got along hereabouts, somewhere, a lot o' the redskins or Britishers (I don't know which) took after 'em, an' for a time there was the liveliest

kind of a race. The Frenchies was loaded up so, — for what with their cannon an' guns, to say nothin' o' their gallons and gallons o' gold, they was havin' a pretty good pull o' it, — an' the other fellows kept a gettin' nearer an' nearer, an' finally it looked as if they'd be taken, as sure as you're born. At last, when they see the' wasn't no sort o' use in tryin' to get away, they dodged in an' eout for a spell, among these here islands, an' at last they got so desperate that they just loaded up their cannon with the gallons o' gold they had, an' after pluggin' up the muzzles, dropped 'em overboard."

"Is that so!" exclaimed Bob.

He was all interest now; and under the circumstances the tale did not appear to be in the least unreasonable to him. The shadows were still on the river, the night wind was still whispering, and the chorus of the tree-toads sounded even louder than before. The story Jed had just told seemed like a part of the scene itself, and Bob was almost ready to accept it as true, without further questioning or investigations of his own.

"Yes, sir, it's so," responded Jed. "I've

heard the story hundreds o' times when I was a boy, though o' late years it's sunk into oblivion, so to speak. Neow I was a thinkin' when you was tellin' o' Pip — ”

“ Phips, you mean,” interrupted Bob.

“ Pip, or Phips, or whatever his name was. I was thinkin' if he could go off deown to the West Indies an' find that gal-lon o' gold, why couldn't we look about here a bit, an' mebbe find t'ose cannon shotted with gold pieces. My, but 'twould be good luck!” he added, with increasing excitement. “ I'm gettin' tired o' bein' a boatman. Not but what it pays purty fair,” he added, as if in duty bound to be just; “ but I've got a mortgage o' one hundred an' eighty-three dollars an' fifty cents on my place, an' 'twould be a great day for me if I could jest walk right up and plank deown the gold for that 'ere encumbrance. My woman would be as tickled as I'd be, too.”

“ Your woman ? ”

“ Yes, my woman, my wife I mean.”

“ Was there any report as to where these cannon were dropped in the river ? ” inquired Bob, slowly.

“ Yes, 'twas somewhere about these parts.”

"You don't know just where?"

"No, I don't. If I did, I wouldn't 'a' told you about it."

"Of course," said Bob, quickly. "But I should have thought the Frenchmen would have come back afterward and got the cannon."

"So should I; but the story is, they didn't. You'd 'a' thought those pirates would 'a' gone back an' got that gallon o' gold what Phips took, too."

"Yes, so I should. Didn't anybody ever try to find these cannon?"

"I b'lieve they did try. Leastwise, that's the way the old story used to run."

"Didn't they ever find them? Didn't they get anything?"

"I b'lieve they did; but that's only a part o' the story, an' p'raps 't isn't so. Ye can't b'lieve everything ye hear."

"Perhaps you can't trust the story about the cannon being sunk, too."

"Oh, I guess that's all true enough. My grandfather used to say it was true, an' he knew what he was talkin' about. But even if some folks did look for the place, an' even if they did find some o' the can-

non, it doesn't mean that they got the whole of the gold, does it?"

"Perhaps not," replied Bob, thoughtfully.

"And you really think, do you, Jed, that some of the shotted cannon are still here?"

"I haven't no sort o' doubt o' it," responded Jed, firmly.

"And you'd like to have us boys try to find it? Is that what you mean?"

"Not much, I don't."

"What do you mean, then? Why did you tell me about it?"

"Because you was the one who knew about Pip finding his gallon o' gold, an' I thought likely you'd know heow 'twas done, an' mebbe together we'd work eout some sort o' scheme here. I'd jest like to find that gold! My! Jest s'pose we should get a thousand dollars! I'd say good-by to that there mortgage o' mine quicker'n shootin'."

"Have you ever said anything to Ethan about it?"

"Ethan! Ethan! Well I rather guess not. If I'd a thought as heow you'd ever 'a' mentioned it to him, I'd 'a' bit my tongue off afore I'd 'a' told you a word on it. I would, jest as trew's you're born."

"I shan't mention it, of course, if you don't wish me to," replied Bob. "Have you any suggestion or plan, Jed?"

"Not much. I hadn't thought o' the story for years an' years till I heard you tellin' abeout Pip to-night, an' somehow that brung it all up to me; an' I was thinkin' if Pip could sail off to the West Indies an' get a whole gallon o' gold, why — why couldn't we take a look hereabeouts, as long as we was here already, an' mebbe we'd find somethin' or other? If nobody don't know nothin' abeout it except you an' me, nobody's chicken roost is goin' to be disturbed if we don't get nothin' but our trouble for our pains. See?"

"Yes, I see. But have you any plan, Jed? What do you think is the best thing to do?"

"I was a thinkin'," replied Jed, "that if somehow you and me could get together to-morrow —"

"To-morrow is Sunday. We don't fish on Sunday."

"Well, the next day, then," responded Jed. "One day'll do as well as another, I s'pose. If you could somehow fix it so't we'd go out together, why we could cruise

about a bit while we was fishin', an' keep an eye on the bottom o' the river along the shore o' some o' these islands; and jest as likely's not, the first thing ye know we'd spy the muzzle o' a cannon a peekin' up at us, an' jest beggin' on us to relieve it o' the gallon o' gold it had been carryin' all these years."

"If the cannon is really there," said Bob, "it must have been there for more than two hundred years. You haven't any idea, have you, Jed, that it wouldn't be all covered up now? I'm afraid we shouldn't be able to see it, even if it should be there as you say."

"That may be true in part," assented Jed. "P'raps a big part o' the gun might be covered up; but jest s'pose the muzzle was not! Jest s'pose we should happen to see it! Ye mustn't forget Pip's gallon o' gold! Very likely *his* cannon was covered up, too, but he got 'em."

"His weren't cannon," said Bob. "He found a galleon."

"I don't care what 'twas. He did it, anyway; an' we can try, can't we?"

"Yes, we can try," assented Bob, as he rose to his feet.

There was no resisting the conviction and enthusiasm of the boatman, even if Bob had been inclined to, which he was not. The combination of circumstances had made him ready to accept the conclusions of his comrade, and in his heart he was eager to begin the search. "We'll have to go back to the house-boat," he said, "or the boys will be out here looking for us, and they'll find out what we're planning to do."

In a few minutes they arrived at the house-boat, when they were hailed by Bert, who said: "Where have you been, Bob? What are you and Jed up to now?"

"I've been viewin' the scenery an' tellin' history," said Jed, solemnly.

"That's what Ethan's been doing, too," said Bert. "He says there was once some cannon shotted with gold, and sunk here in the river. Your story of Phips made him think of it."

"Is that so?" said Bob, quietly.

"Yes; he says the Frenchmen, or somebody, sunk some here one time. It would be a great thing if we could find them, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, I think it would," was all the reply that Bob made.

The subject was then dropped, but Bob felt, rather than saw, that Jed was greatly disturbed by what he had just heard, though there was no opportunity to speak to him until just before all retired for the night. Then the boatman drew near Bob, and, unobserved by the others, said in a low whisper:—

“That’s jest like Ethan. He’s spoiled the whole thing.”

“Oh, no, he hasn’t.”

“What makes you think so?”

“The boys aren’t thinking of what he said at all. Just keep still, and we’ll have a chance Monday morning to do something.”

“Don’t say anything about it, then.”

“Not a word.”

“We’ll beat ’em yet,” whispered Jed, his confidence apparently having returned in full force. “I’d be most willin’ to give up the gallon o’ gold, jest for the sake o’ beatin’ Ethan. Good night.”

“Good night,” responded Bob, as he made his way to his sleeping quarters.

As he thought over the events of the evening, he was troubled far more than he had cared for Jed to know. He was by no

means positive that the other boys, and even Ethan himself, had no thought of making a search for the buried treasure. There was but one skiff now, and for a time a part of the company would be compelled to remain on the house-boat while the others were gone. What could be done, was a perplexing problem; and when at last Bob fell asleep, no solution had been found.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE LOST CANNON.

THE quiet of the intervening Sunday was greatly enjoyed by all the members of our party, for the excitement through which they had recently passed had made the break doubly pleasing. The very river itself also seemed to share in the calmness of the day, and the waters among the islands were almost like glass. Strife, struggle, and excitement of all kinds were in no way to be thought of, in the midst of such surroundings, and "the natural way of living" was uppermost in the minds of all. There are times when such breaks in the struggles of school and the larger arena outside the college walls are greatly enjoyed by even the most energetic of men; but the "natural" life, after all, is not that which is free from the stronger contests that come to all true men. A vacation, to be enjoyed to the uttermost, must not only be a rest

from labor, but a rest for labor; and the "saint" is not he who withdraws from the anxieties and burdens of the struggle for existence, but he who remains in the contest and quits himself like a man. Sometimes to live and do the right is as great a test of the martyr and saintlike spirit as it is to die for the truth.

Perhaps no such abstract thoughts were in the minds of the boys in the house-boat, and certainly they never once thought of the martyr or the saint, though they were in a region hallowed by the names of both. They were too happy, and life to them presented as yet so few of its serious aspects, that they would not have understood what any one meant, had he tried to teach them of these things. They were simply straightforward, upright, manly young fellows, abounding with life, and a surplus of healthy animal spirits; and the good time for which they had come was not clouded by visions or thoughts of the unknown burdens which coming days might bring to each of them.

With the coming of Monday morning, there also came the returning zeal which had marked them in the preceding days.

Bob, who had been thinking much of the story of the sunken cannon, had become more impressed with the possibility of discovering their whereabouts; but he had made no reference to his convictions or conclusions to his friends. It was not that he did not wish them to share with him in the prize, if possible success should crown the search he now was determined to make; it was rather the uncertainty of the entire matter, and the certainty, as he thought, that Ben and Bert would make sport of the story and project alike. And, indeed, there were moments when even Bob himself would feel inclined to look at the affair in that way, also. Doubtless it was but a tradition or fireside tale that the grandfathers of another generation had concocted, or had magnified the vague rumors which had come down from the early days, when Frontenac and his men had sailed over the waters of the majestic St. Lawrence. If the cannon really had been shotted with gold coin and cast into the river, it was but natural to conclude that they had been found again by the men who had first concealed them.

And yet, there was the story of Phips,

vouched for by the most careful of historians, and the marvellous success which had crowned his efforts, after repeated and the most discouraging of failures. Without doubt, all that might be said against the probability of finding the lost cannon in the St. Lawrence might have been urged with equal justice against the attempt of Phips and his piratical crew. But there was the one statement which could neither be gainsaid nor explained away, and that was, that he had succeeded; the sunken galleon had been found, and the lost gold and jewels recovered. If Phips had succeeded, why might not others succeed also? And every time, when the misgivings arose, Bob would return to the one result recorded in the old records, and that was that Phips had really found the lost valuables.

So Bob every time would resolve, though his better judgment would not fail to assert itself in opposition, that what had once been done might be done again. To all these things the calm, unbroken conviction of Jed was at once a consolation and aid; and when Monday morning came, as we have said, Bob was ready, and even eager, to follow out anything the sturdy boatman was inclined to propose.

Whatever was undertaken must be done secretly; and the fact that but one skiff was now in the possession of the boys presented a phase of the problem that could not be ignored, for the present, at least. As soon as the four boys were seated at the breakfast table, Ethan said:—

“What’s goin’ to be done to-day?”

“That’s just what I was thinking of, Ethan,” replied Jock. “There are several fish yet in the river, if I’m not mistaken, and I thought the fellows would probably want to try the fishing again. We’re going to have a good day, aren’t we?”

“Pretty fair, pretty fair,” responded Ethan, who under few circumstances could be entrapped into making a positive statement. “But ye haven’t but one skiff. I thought mebbe ye’d like to have me start out with that, an’ see if I could hear anything about the other one.”

“Have you any idea that you really could get the other boat?”

“Can’t say as to that. I might be able, an’ then again I mightn’t. It’s all uncertain, an’ nobody knows nothin’ about it.”

“If I thought it could be found,” said Jock, thoughtfully, “of course I should say,

go and search for it. We don't want to lose it, of course; and then we need two all the time now."

"I'll tell ye what to do," said Jed. "You jest let me an' Bob take this skiff, an' we'll go about among these islands an' see what we can see; an' if we don't see nothin', an' can't find any one what's seen or heard of the skiff, why, we'll put over to the main shore an' see if we can't hire a skiff for a few days. That is, if all this is agreeable to you. 'Tisn't for me to say, o' course."

"But your hands aren't in any condition for you to row," said Jock.

"Never ye mind about my han's," replied Jed, quickly. "They was only scratched a bit, an' 'tisn't as if I'd have to row hard. We'll take it easy, and the current will be about all we want. Then, if I find that it's too much for me, Bob here will rest me a space, and take his turn."

"I'll be very glad to do that," responded Bob, speaking slowly, as he perceived what Jed's design was. Nevertheless, in order to prevent his companions from concluding that he was too eager to go, he said: "But what'll the other fellows be doing while

I'm gone? I don't want to leave them here with nothing to do but watch the scenery."

"Oh, they'll be all right. They can take their rods and still-fish, or we can take the house-boat out an' anchor it in a good spot, an' you can fish from the deck. You don't always have to troll to make the best catches, an' you don't always have to keep around the shoals to find the biggest bass. Many's the time —"

"Jed! Jed Bates!" interrupted Ethan, sharply, glaring at his comrade as he spoke.

"I don't care," retorted Jed, quickly. "Ye can't scare me with your looks, Ethan. If ye could, I'd 'a' been a ravin' lunatic long afore this. I'm not a bit scared to tell the boys. They won't take no advantage o' it."

"Take advantage of what?" said Jock. "We don't want to take advantage of anybody. I don't understand what you mean."

"I mean jest what I'm sayin'," replied Jed, warmly. "Sometimes the biggest bass don't grow where the boatmen make ye think they be. It's business with them, that's jest what 'tis; and I'm not sayin' it isn't all fair enough for to protect yerselves. I do it, an' I'd do it in a minute neow, only

I'm not a bit afraid o' you boys givin' us away."

"I don't see how you need to protect yourselves from us," said Bob.

"Jed! Jed Bates, ye've said enough! Jest keep still, will ye? 'Twill be a treat to the whole o' us, jest to hear yer silence." Ethan spoke appealingly, reproachfully the boys thought, and their own confusion was naturally increased. Not one of them understood the cause of Ethan's evident anxiety.

"I'm not a goin' to keep still," replied Jed. "Jest s'pose ye try it yerself, Ethan, though I know ye couldn't do it. What I was a sayin' was jest this," he continued. "Ye hear everybody, includin' the boatmen, a sayin' as heow ye jest have to fish for bass off the shoals, an' have to troll, too. Well, the' is bass on the shoals. I'm not disputin' that; but that doesn't mean that's the only place they grow, does it? Not much! The's holes an' deep water where they grows, too, only ye see the fishin' is the business o' lots o' us; an' if we told the folks we took eout there they could catch jest as many, or more, if the' was to fish in deep water, an' still-fish at that, why, our

trade'd be gone in a minute. An' so we jest have to keep up 'pearances, ye see, an' keep folks a trollin'."

"I didn't know you could ever catch bass in deep water," said Ben.

"Well, ye can. Only last week I went out alone, one day, an' dropped two or three lines in a certain deep hole which I happen to know, an' some folks don't," and Jed glanced proudly at Ethan as he spoke. "Well, I had a little perch for bait, an' the fust thing I knew I had a strike, an' yanked up a leetle bass what wasn't big enough to swaller the perch. The leetle rascal hung on, though; an' when I threw him back into the water, — I never b'lieve in keepin' the leetle ones, for I always throw 'em back, an' leave 'em to grow up an' be big ones by an' by, — I made up my mind as heow that little fellow's pa an' ma wouldn't on no account let him be eout alone, an' so I concluded they must be near by, too. Well, sir, if ye'll b'lieve me, in less'n half a hour I had caught four bass there what weighed more'n twenty pounds. Yes, sir, I did, for a fact; an' it was in deep water, too. No shoal nor nothin' o' the kind."

"Jed, was you a fishin' with a rod an' a line in the hand?" inquired Ethan, sharply.

"You didn't need to ask no such question's that," retorted Jed, though for some reason which the boys could not understand his countenance instantly fell, and it was evident that Ethan's unexpected question had somewhat disconcerted his rival. "I'm only a tellin' what can be done in deep water, if a man is familiar enough with the river to know where to go," he continued, with an attempt to keep up his boldness, which somehow seemed to have deserted him.

"That's worth lookin' into," said Ethan. "I think I'll have to ask Hat Heath if he knows anything about it."

"Ye'd better ask him; an' while ye're about it, ye'd better ask all o' the other game constables, too, if they can't help ye to find the places in the St. Lawrence where the bass grow. Ye won't be the first one what's done that. Some gets their livin' that way, accordin' to reports I hear."

"I don't have to ask no game constable to tell *me* where to find bass," retorted Ethan, angrily, instantly made to forget his threat by the taunt. "I thought you

an' Bob here was a goin' to take the skiff an' see if ye couldn't hear somethin' or other about the other one."

"So we be," replied Jed, instantly rising, and winking shrewdly at Bob as he passed him to launch the skiff.

Bob quickly followed; but before he took his seat Jed returned to the house-boat, and brought with him one of the long cedar poles which was used to catch large minnows. Ethan eyed the boatman keenly; but whatever may have been his thoughts, he did not express them, and in a few minutes Jed and Bob set forth on their expedition.

As soon as they were out of sight, the boatman said: "I didn't know whether we'd make it or not, for I was afraid we couldn't get away without their suspectin' us, seein' as heow we had only one skiff now. But Ethan rose to my bait just as well as a pickerel takes a frog. There's more'n one kind o' fishin', and there's more'n one kind o' bait," he added sagely.

"What do you mean?" inquired Bob.

"Why, when I began to talk about still-fishin' for bass in deep water, he thought I was goin' to let on more'n I intended to

about the secrets o' our trade. He needn't 'a' been scared, for I don't propose to tell all I know. Not much! I jest let on enough to scare him, an' he was mighty glad to have us take the skiff an' clear eout afore more damage was did."

As Bob laughed heartily, now that he understood the device of the boatman, Jed said: "Neow keep a good lookout, an' mebbe we'll see somethin' o' them cannon. If ye see anything that looks like gold, jest call eout."

Bob looked over the side of the boat into the clear depths below. Rocks and logs could be discerned almost as clearly as if they had been on land. Occasionally a fish could be seen darting swiftly away at their approach. The clear, beautiful water evidently had no secrets it desired to conceal; and full of eagerness the lad entered into the spirit of the search, and maintained a careful lookout on the bottom of the river, as the skiff moved slowly down the stream.

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CHAPTER XXI.

A CRITICAL MOMENT.

WHEN a brief time had elapsed, at the suggestion of the boatman Bob let out a line, and holding the rod in his hands, still continued to gaze through the clear waters at the bottom of the river. Not even when several times he succeeded in landing the fish which seemed to be eager for their breakfast, did his interest become diverted from the search he was making.

Several times the sight of a half concealed log or a peculiarly shaped rock made him think that he had spied a cannon; but every time a closer inspection revealed his mistake, and the skiff moved slowly forward, guided by the oars which Jed managed with consummate skill, in spite of the condition of his hands.

For an hour conversation flagged, so intent were both men upon the main object of their coming. The sun was by this time

well up in the eastern sky, and the promise of the early morning that the day would be excessively warm was being freely verified. The breeze had all died away, and the water was almost motionless, save for the strong silent current which bore all things onward with its resistless power. Even the beauties of the scenery were without power to charm now, and the search for gold, which under various disguises becomes such an engrossing pursuit to many men, had asserted its influence in the region from which, to all appearances, such matters had been banished.

At the expiration of the hour, when nothing had been discovered that afforded any promise of success, Jed said, "I declare! I'd 'most forgot what we came for. We've got to go through the motions of lookin' for that skiff, though I haven't any idee we shall find hide or hair of it. But 'twon't do to go back without havin' something to say, anyway."

"That's right, Jed," responded Bob, sitting quickly erect as he spoke. "We might as well give up this fool's errand, first as last."

"I'm not sayin' it's a fool's errand," re-

plied Jed. "I didn't expect we'd find the spot first off. We'll have to make some inquiries about that 'ere skiff, I s'pose; but we don't need to give up lookin' for the cannon."

The sight of a party of three men fishing from some rocks on the shore caused the boatman to send the skiff swiftly toward them, and as it came near, he said:—

"Have any o' you men heard tell on a skiff floatin' deown the river night afore last?"

"What kind of a skiff was it?" inquired one of the men.

"'Twas jest a skiff. 'Twasn't no particular kind."

"When did you say you lost it?"

"It got loose night afore last. It might 'a' drifted deown here in the dark, or it might 'a' gone by in the daytime."

"Was it a good one?"

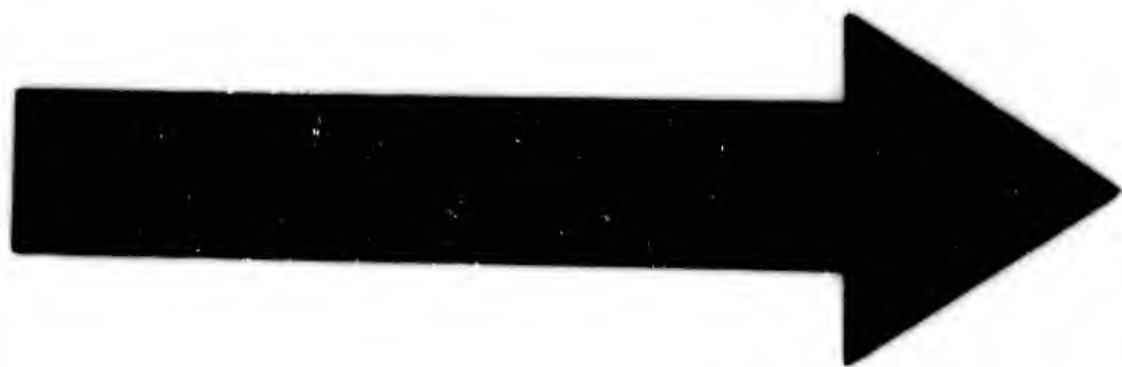
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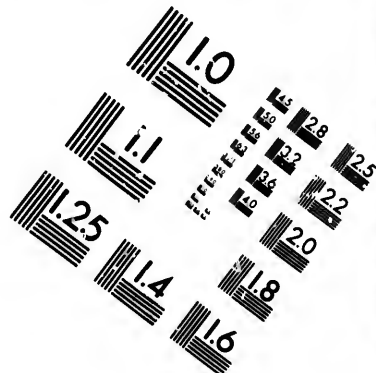
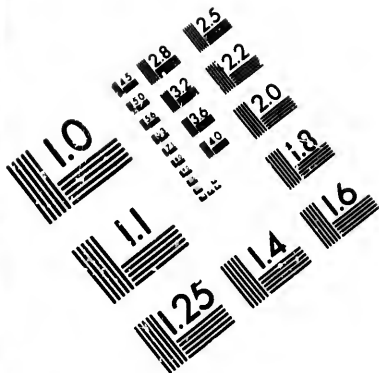
"As good as that one you're in now?"

"Jest about. Purty much like it. Have ye seen anything on it?"

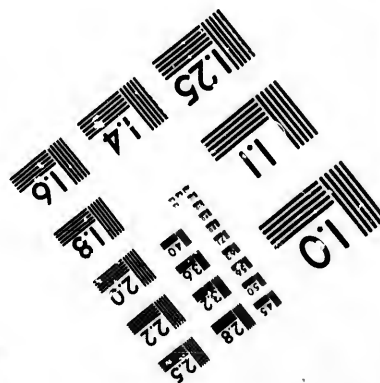
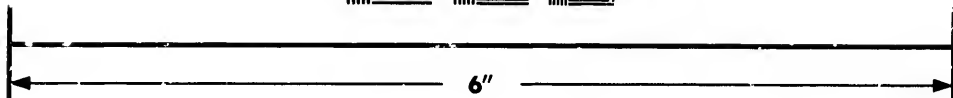
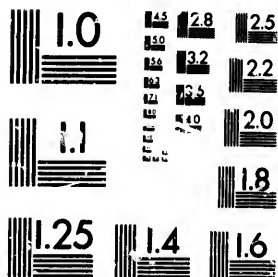
"No. We haven't seen any skiff drifting past here."

"There ye be again!" muttered Jed, as





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he began to pull vigorously at his oars once more. "It's jest as I was tellin' ye, Bob. The War o' 1812 has got to be fit all over again. The' isn't a man in the whole o' Canada what'll do us a favor. No, sir, not one in the whole kit an' caboodle o' 'em."

"But these men said they hadn't seen any skiff," Bob ventured to protest mildly. "I don't see how you can blame them for the War of 1812. They didn't have anything to do with that."

"Didn't, hey? That don't make no difference. They're all o' one passel [parcel]. They're agin every one."

"Try those people on that little dock ahead," suggested Bob. "Perhaps they'll know something about the boat we've lost."

"No use," muttered Jed, who nevertheless rowed toward the spot his companion had referred to. "'Twon't do a bit o' good."

"Let me ask them this time," said Bob.

"Go ahead. You'll soon find eout whether ye'll get any help or not."

"Have you seen or heard of a skiff adrift on the river?" called Bob, as they drew near the dock.

"No, we haven't," responded one man, courteously.

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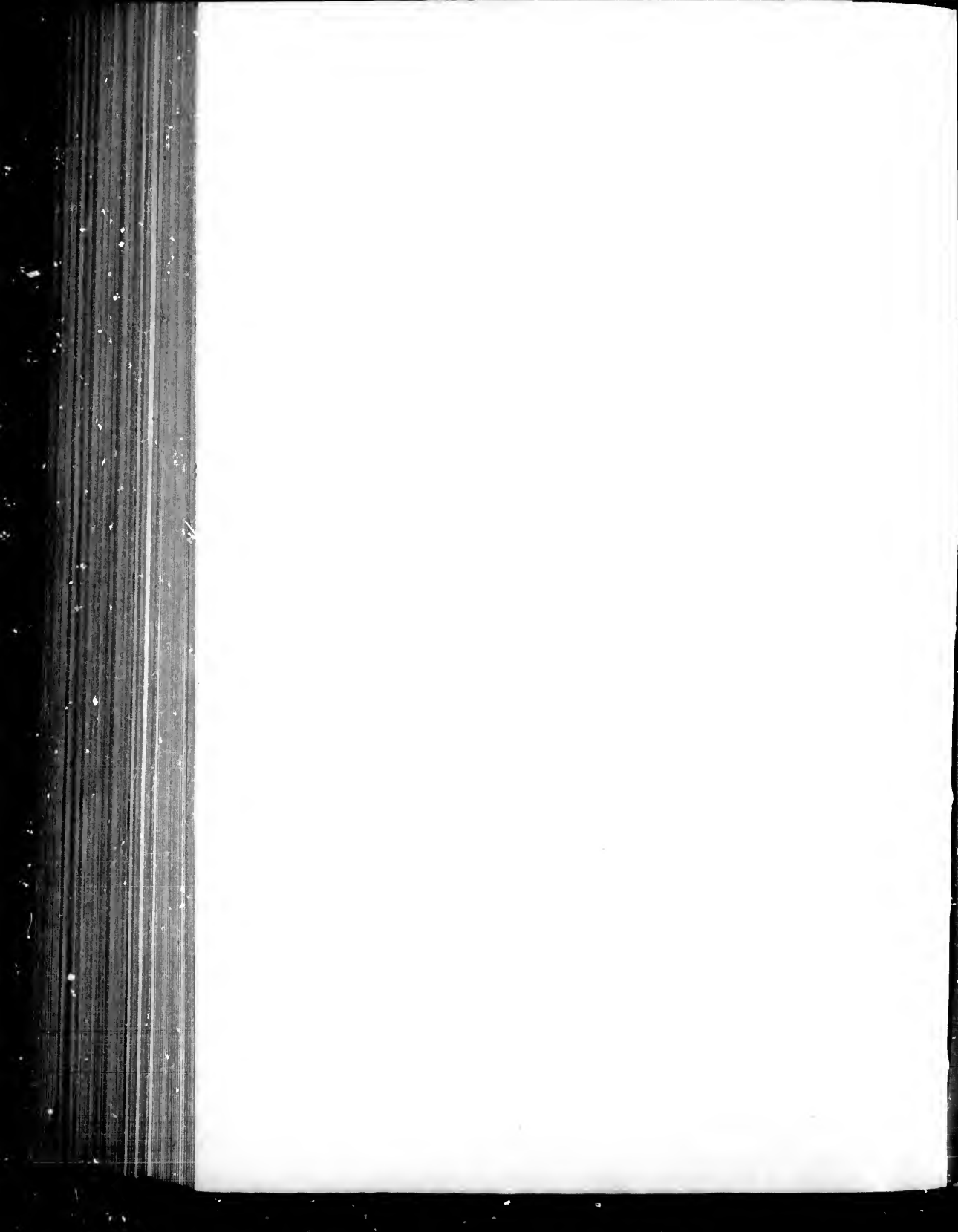
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"DID YE EVER HEAR O' THE WAR O' 1812?" Page 261.



"Humph! Jest as I told ye," muttered Jed, though he took pains to prevent his voice from being heard by the people on the dock.

"One of our skiffs got away from us," continued Bob, "and we haven't been able to get any trace of it as yet."

"How long ago was it that you lost it?" inquired the man who had spoken before.

"It got away from us in the storm, night before last."

The man shook his head, as he replied: "I'm afraid you won't see it again. Did it have any name on it?"

"No."

"There are so many boats like that on the river, I'm afraid you'll find it difficult to identify it. If we hear of one being found, we'll send you word, if you'll give us your address."

Bob gave the post-office address as he had been requested, and then turned to Jed, as if he expected the boatman to resume his labors. But to his surprise Jed turned toward the people on the dock, and called out sharply, "Did ye ever hear o' the War o' 1812?"

"Yes, we've heard of it," laughed the man who had spoken before. "Did you lose your skiff then?"

"No, we didn't lose our skiff then," retorted Jed, sharply. "Who licked in that war?"

"I don't know just who could be said to have won," replied the stranger.

"Did ye ever hear o' the battle o' Lundy's Lane?"

"Yes, I've heard of the battle you people from the States call by that name."

"Well, who beat?"

"Certainly you didn't."

"We didn't! We didn't!" exclaimed Jed, excitedly. "Who drove the redcoats off the field? Tell me that, will ye! Jest tell me that!"

"I will, when you tell me who held the field after the battle," replied the stranger, good-naturedly.

"That's it! That's jest the way of it, every time. Next time I guess ye'll know who beat."

"I sincerely hope there never will be a next time."

Bob, who had been greatly surprised at the sudden turn the conversation had taken,

now broke in to say: "We thank you very heartily for your offer to send us word if you hear anything of our lost skiff. Come on, Jed, we must go on with our search."

As the boatman resumed his labors and the skiff passed the dock, Bob joined in the good-natured laughter of the strangers, and shook his head as one of the men touched his forehead significantly.

"That fellow thinks I'm crazy," exclaimed Jed, angrily, as the boat passed out of the hearing of the people, "but I'm not a bit more crazy'n he is. I know him. He wrote up a whole lot about the war in this part o' the country, an' he's too one-sided to live. I read some o' his articles last winter, an' he jest says over an' over again that neither side really whipped the other. What d'ye think o' that? Did ye ever hear anythin' to beat that, in all yer born days?"

"Yes, I think I've seen people as one-sided as he is."

"I never did," remarked Jed, decidedly. "The folks in Canada is the most set folks I ever saw. Beats all, how they stick to their p'int."

"It is strange," said Bob, quizzically.

"Yes, sir," said Jed, unconscious of his companion's banter. "They hang to their point like a dog to a root. I hate to see folks so one-sided."

"Perhaps they're thinking of Hull and Wilkinson, and a few others of our men, who certainly didn't reflect any very great credit on us in the early part of that war."

"Mebbe the' didn't; but heow about Commodore Perry an' Tippecanoe an' Jacob Brown? Tell me about them, will ye?"

"I've read of their bravery; but if I was going to talk of the War of 1812, I think I'd refer to Andrew Jackson's fight at New Orleans."

"What'd he do there?" inquired Jed, eagerly. "I didn't know the' was a fight there."

"Well, there was, though it was fought after peace had been declared — it took so long to get word over here."

"Who beat?"

"Why, Jackson did. In about twenty-five minutes he'd driven back the British, who were advancing on the city, and had inflicted a loss of twenty-five hundred upon them."

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"How many did Jackson lose?" said Jed, in excitement.

"He lost eight men killed and thirteen wounded."

"Gum!" ejaculated Jed, as he suddenly reversed the course of the skiff and started swiftly back up the river.

"What are you doing? Where are you going?" exclaimed Bob, in dismay.

"I'm a goin' back an' ask that history chap, back there, if he ever heard tell o' New Orleans. I'm jest a goin' to let him put that in his pipe an' smoke it."

Bob had no mind to be a party to the controversy, and as the only means he could think of to divert the attention of his boatman he said, "We'll lose time, Jed. Perhaps these cannon are right down the stream. They may be off the shore of that island yonder."

"I don't care nothin' about no cannon," said Jed, sharply. "I'm a goin' to ask that history man if he ever heard o' New Orleans."

Despite Bob's protests, Jed held to his course; but when they drew near the dock, it was discovered that the people who had been there had disappeared from sight. As

there was a cottage on the bank, not far from the dock, surmising that the man he so much desired to see had sought its shelter, Jed rose in the boat and shouted: —

“Heow about New Orleans? Ever hear tell o’ New Orleans?”

No response was made to his hail, and as no one appeared on the piazza of the cottage, Jed repeated his summons; but still no attention was given it.

“That’s the way with some folks,” remarked Jed, in evident disgust, as he resumed his labors at the oars; “they crawl into a hole an’ then pull the hole in after ’em. But that’s a good one, that is, about New Orleans. I’ll ask that fellow about it, the very first time I see him.”

In response to Bob’s suggestion that it would soon be midday and time for them to return to the house-boat and to dinner, and if they were to secure another skiff, as Jock had directed them to, they must cross to the main shore, Jed accordingly changed the direction of the boat, and began to row toward the Canadian shore. They were still among the islands, however, and Bob maintained his lookout for the sunken cannon. Not that a strong hope remained

now of finding them, for the time for reflection which the morning had given had caused him to think more soberly of the matter, and the project now seemed a fool-hardy one. Nevertheless, he continually looked over the side of the boat into the clear waters over which they were passing.

The great boulders and huge rocks could be distinctly seen. Even the seams and cracks stood forth to view, and the trunks and branches of trees which years before had fallen into the water were plainly discernible. Bob was idly watching them all, but suddenly, as they drew near the shore of the smaller islands, he sat erect and peered more intently down into the transparent depths.

"Hold on a minute, Jed!" he said in a low voice.

"What is it? Have ye found it? Have ye found the cannon?"

"I don't know. Look over on this side and see what you think of it."

Jed eagerly responded, and far down in the waters beheld the object which had arrested the attention of his comrade. If it was not the muzzle of a cannon, it certainly very strongly resembled it; and

greatly excited, Jed at once fastened the long light cedar rod he had brought to his gaff, and then leaned over the side as he thrust the contrivance toward the object to which Bob had directed his attention.

The water was still too deep to enable him to touch it, and he was about to add one of the rods to the pole, when Bob quickly said, in a low voice: —

“Look out, Jed. There comes Ethan and Bert.”

Glancing up the river, the boatman beheld a skiff approaching, and had no difficulty in perceiving that Ethan and Bert were indeed near by.

Instantly dropping the rod, and picking up his oars, he began to row swiftly toward the approaching boat, all the time endeavoring to assume an air of calmness which he was far from feeling.

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CHAPTER XX.I.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

“WHAT are you doing? Trying to pull up the bottom of the St. Lawrence?” called Bert, as the skiffs came near together.

“That would be more than some people catch,” responded Bob. “Whose skiff is that? Where did you get it?”

“It’s our skiff.”

“The one we lost?”

“Yea, verily; the very same.”

“How did you find it? We were just starting for Canada to hire one, for we’d almost given up hopes of ever finding the old one.”

“You were acting very much as if you were on your way to Canada,” remarked Bert. “Let me see. Canada is bounded on the north by the sky, on the south by the bottom of the St. Lawrence, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the east by the atmosphere and the horizon. You

were trying to go in by the southern side, weren't you?"

"Where did you get the skiff, Bert?" said Bob, striving to divert the attention of his friend from the thought of the occupation in which he had been discovered.

"Why, those men who found the house-boat heard of a lost, or rather a found, skiff, when they went home, and this morning they came over with it to see if it was ours. I'm not certain that it is, by any manner of means; but it'll do as well as any other, I fancy, and I'm not one who believes in ignoring the gifts of fortune. We're in need of a skiff; a skiff is brought us; *ergo*, this skiff becomes ours. Besides, Ethan declares it's the long-lost, though how he knows so much is beyond my powers of comprehension, for they're all pretty much alike to me."

"That's our skiff," said Jed, "there's no mistake about that."

"I'm glad to have your opinion, too, Jed," responded Bert. "It's like an expert in handwriting, and the more you get to swear in one way, the better it is for all of us. Bob, what were you doing back there when we found you?" he suddenly added.

"Waiting for you to come and discover us. I thought you'd never come."

"You seemed to be delighted or almost scared to death, I couldn't quite tell which. What *were* you doing, Bob?"

"Fishin'," responded Jed, before his companion could reply.

"Well, what made you give up so suddenly when we came?"

"You'd scare anything in the St. Lawrence river. You didn't think we'd have anything, did ye, after you brought that voice o' yours along? 'Twas 'most like a foghorn."

"There's the house-boat," exclaimed Bob. "I didn't know we were so near home. Ethan, I hope you've dinner almost ready?"

"'Twon't take long to git it, neow," replied Ethan, speaking for the first time since they started for home, if home their floating domicile might be termed.

"I'm glad of that," said Bob. "It gives one a huge appetite to be out all the morning on the river."

"I'm sorry you didn't get that fish," said Bert. "Some fish would have tasted good for dinner."

He laughed derisively as he spoke, and

Bob knew that his friend had his suspicions of what their occupation, when they had been discovered, had really been. Of course it was impossible to determine just how much he knew; but the fact that he had become suspicious complicated matters somewhat, and added a new element to the problem. For the self-restrained Bob had become unusually aroused over the discovery of what might prove to be the object of their search. It was too bad, he thought, that they had been interrupted just at the critical moment, but he had marked well the neighboring shore, and was positive that he could identify the spot again, and there were many days yet to come before the summer would be ended. Meanwhile, it would never do to let his mischievous friend know even of the hopes in his mind. It would be time enough to tell him about it all after success had crowned his efforts, and if, on the other hand, failure came, then he would be saved from the gibes and bantering of Bert, which he fully understood would be neither light nor few.

“We’ve got fish enough for dinner,” remarked Jed. “I had Bob out with me this time, and ’twasn’t much like the other

mornin', when I had you an' Ben," he said sharply to Bert. "It's the most discouragin' thing in the world for a boatman to have green hands along with him what can't land a bass, not even when he walks right up to the landin'-net, and begs on ye to take him aboard. If it's all the same to Ethan here, I think I'd rather change pardners with him — that is, o' course, if he hasn't no objection to so doin'."

"'Twon't make no difference to me," responded Ethan, soberly. "I'm thinkin' we'll git some fish, no matter who's aboard."

"You'll know more after you've tried it, I guess."

"I'll hope so. Some folks can't never seem to learn nothin'."

"Some folks don't seem to need to learn so much as others. They know a lee-e-ttle somethin' afore they start eout."

The warfare between the boatmen threatened to break out afresh; and as that was something neither of the boys desired, they both united in a shout to announce their coming to their friends on the house-boat. An answering shout came across the water, and as each boatman at once increased his

efforts, they speedily arrived at their destination. There the skiffs were lifted from the water and borne up on the bank, to make sure, for the present at least, that they would not be lost again. Then the boys sought the interior of the house-boat, while the boatmen hastened to prepare the dinner for which all were now eagerly waiting.

In the afternoon the parties set forth once more, but although Bob was assigned to Jed's boat, Bert steadily refused to give up his place there, and so it was impossible for them to return to the spot where the cannon had been discovered. Jed plainly showed his irritation at the turn of events, but Bob maintained his customary composure, hoping thereby to convince his friend that he had nothing he desired to conceal from him; but he was by no means assured of his success when, at nightfall, all returned to the house-boat, for Bert, for some unknown cause, occasionally broke into a laugh, and quizzically pretended to console his companion for his disappointment.

"I don't understand what you mean by my disappointment," said Bob. "I've had a good day. I don't see anything to be disappointed about."

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“Do you see that?” inquired Bert, as he held forth a needle in his hand.

“See it? Of course I see it. What of it?”

“Oh, nothing much; only I’m glad you’re able to see the point for once in your life.”

“I wish I could say that you’d made a point clear for once in your life,” retorted Bob, quickly; “but I can’t. I’m truthful, I am, and I cannot tell a lie. I don’t know how.”

“You know more than you pretend to,” responded Bert, as a laugh arose from his friends. “Perhaps some day you’ll find out that I’m not so big a fool as I look. It’s the way my mother dresses me.”

“Bert,” replied Bob, “you’re pretending to know something about me, or about what you think I’ve done, or something or other, I don’t just understand what. Now speak right out. Don’t be afraid. If you know *anything*, let’s have it. Speak, pretty creature, speak.”

“Silence is golden,” retorted Bert; “therefore I’m as silent as — as — as that golden treasure in the Spanish galleon your friend Phips found, for example,” and he glanced keenly at Bob as he spoke.

"I'm afraid no Phips will ever be found to bring your golden silence to the surface. Some things are better when they're buried deep in the dark, blue sea."

"Don't bury his *silence*," interrupted Ben, quickly. "If he shows any disposition to bring that out, don't interfere with him! Don't, I beg of you! No one ever will know what I've suffered all through freshman year. I actually think I'd have made a recitation once or twice, if Bert would only have given me a chance."

For a long time the boys remained on the deck of the house-boat, and their laughter and songs were the only sounds to be heard. The "good time" for which they had come was evidently at hand, and adventures and mishaps were alike forgotten in the pleasure of the hour. The plans for the following day were all arranged before the boys retired, and when at last silence once more rested over the waters, it is safe to say that no one appreciated it more than the occupants of the house-boat, who were lost in the "dreamless sleep" of healthy, light-hearted boyhood.

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morning broke in the midst of a steady downpour of rain. The sport of the day was thereby destroyed; but there was no lack of means by which to pass the time, for ample provision had been made for this very emergency. Ethan, as his services would not be required, was to go home at sunset, promising to be back in ample time to assist in carrying the boys on the following day to "The Rocks," where Mr. Clarke's cottage was situated, and where the entire party was to assemble for the promised picnic.

In the afternoon Bob took one of the skiffs, and in spite of the steadily falling rain, started for the place where he had discovered the cannon. He took pains to appear as if he was in no eagerness to go, declaring that the rain was not so bad as the enforced inactivity; and that he would be back soon. If he had seen Bert stealthily follow him a few minutes after his departure, perhaps his peace of mind might have been somewhat disturbed; but "ignorance was bliss," in his case at least, and all unmindful that he was being followed, he rowed leisurely down the stream, until at last he arrived at the longed-for place.

As he looked about him, when he rested on his oars, he began to suspect that perhaps he had made a mistake after all, and had not found the exact spot. Yet there was the split rock and the clump of cedars he had noted, and so striving to convince himself that he was correct, he sent the skiff a little nearer the shore, to enable him to peer down into the depths below. But the water was somewhat ruffled by the storm; and the absence of the sunlight prevented him from seeing clearly into the water.

Slowly up and down the river he moved, all the time glancing eagerly over the side of the skiff, and keeping well inshore; but his efforts were unrewarded. He could not distinguish the objects on the bottom of the river, and at last he concluded that he either had come to the wrong place, or that he must postpone his task till another day.

Accordingly he grasped his oars and was about to return to the house-boat, when he was startled by the sound of a boat coming down the river. Before he could withdraw from the spot, he perceived a skiff now close by, and it required no second glance to show that its occupant was none other than Bert himself. It was annoying, to say the

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least, to feel that he was being watched by his friend ; and as he waited for him to come nearer, he was busily devising some scheme by which he might be able to divert the attention of the inquisitive lad ; or, better still, to turn the tables upon him and make him feel that he was the one on the defensive.

No plan had presented itself, however, when Bert rowed alongside, and in response to the good-natured laugh with which he was greeted, Bob said, " You looking for me, Bert ? "

" Not exactly. You are well enough in your way, but just at the present time I'm after something else."

" What is that ? "

" Gold."

" Pretty thick around here. All you have to do is to pick it off the bushes."

" Now see here, Bob, you can't fool me, for I know what you and Jed are after. I didn't mean to overhear you the other night, but I couldn't help it. So own up, now, and let me into your trick. I'll never tell."

" Do you really want to hear about it ? "

" I do that."

“All right. Come on back to the house-boat then.”

A scheme had suddenly suggested itself to Bob's fertile brain, by which he might divert the too eager interest of his friend, and at the same time teach him a much-needed lesson for his interference.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

A CALL FOR HELP.

"If I let you into this scheme," said Bob, when at last the skiffs had been restored to their places, and the two boys were on the house-boat, "it isn't going to be as a passenger. You'll have to do your part."

"When did I ever fail to do that, I'd like to have you inform me?"

"I don't mean the part you take at the breakfast-table, or the ornamental you usually like best of all. It's work, downright hard work, you'll have to do. You can't provide the brains or think out the plan, for that's been done already. It's the manual labor that'll fall to your share, my friend."

"I shan't draw back. You never heard me whine yet. But honestly, Bob, did you intend to dig out that gold and leave all the rest of us out in the cold? I wouldn't have believed it of you, I wouldn't, honestly."

"I didn't intend anything of the kind," retorted Bob, warmly, as he found himself, in spite of his efforts, placed upon the defensive. "But I didn't know, and don't yet, for the matter of that, whether we'd find anything in the scheme or not. It would be time enough to let the other fellows know, when we found out whether the story was anything more than a story."

"But you've found out enough to give you hope. You can't fool me."

"We've found nothing," responded Bob, quickly; "at least, all we've found is a spot that's worth looking into. Now Bert, understand, you're not to mention this to one of the fellows, and you're not to refer to it to Jed, either."

"Why not?"

"I've good reasons for what I say, and plenty of them, too. Do you agree?"

"I'll agree to anything, if you'll only give me a share in the million dollars, more or less, that's in those shotted cannon. Just fancy me, will you, saying to my stern parent when he ventures to remonstrate with me when I've tried to suggest that a further and increased remittance would be highly acceptable to the undersigned —

just fancy me saying in my exultant tones :
' Very well, sir. I am no longer dependent upon my ancestors for the lucre wherewith to pay my college dues. I, too, have a pile, and the day is not far distant when you and all my country cousins shall plead with me to disgorge.' Just think of me striking an attitude, and with my head toward the stars, and a smile of pride and of scorn on my aristocratic features, and my hands in my pockets, holding fast to my ill-gotten gains — no, I don't mean that exactly. I mean, I mean — well, I don't know that I just know what I do mean."

"Splendid, Bert, splendid! You recall to my mind some of the brilliant recitations you make in Latin. Indeed, that last clause is just burned into my memory, and I never can forget it. But you do as I tell you, and don't lisp a word of this to a soul, not even to Jed; for I'm afraid he'd feel so discouraged if he heard you had joined the band, he'd want to resign."

"I am your humble servant."

"See that you continue to be, if you would retain my favor, likewise any of the buried gold," said Bob, in mock solemnity.

An early supper was had that evening,

and Ethan sailed away for his home. He was back again, however, on the following morning, long before the sun was up, to say nothing of the sleepers in the house-boat, and breakfast was prepared before it was fairly day. Then, with a sail in each skiff, and a boatman at each tiller, the boys sailed away for "The Rocks," where they were to join the party that had planned for the outing of the day. As soon as they arrived, Mr. Clarke arranged with the boatmen that they should return to the house-boat, and that he would, in his yacht, bring the boys back to their floating abode at the end of the day.

The four friends were greeted with a shout from the young ladies whom they had met in the preceding summer; for Miss Bessie had not only invited the friends who had been with her before, but in addition there were two others, and, to the surprise of the newcomers, they also discovered that there were to be several other young fellows in the party, two of whom were at once recognized as students from the college which was the chief rival to their own.

Miss Bessie's surprise, when she introduced the latest arrivals, to learn that they

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had already met, was great; and when she discovered that they were shaking hands not only very cordially but in a peculiar manner, her curiosity was also aroused.

"What do you do that for?" she demanded.

"We're just giving the grip," explained Jock, laughingly.

"The grippe? The grippe? My father had that last winter, but I didn't know that you college boys just tried to give it to one another."

"It's not that kind," laughed Jock. "We're members of the same fraternity, and are just showing that we understand one another on the start."

"Do you mean secret societies?"

"Yes."

"Is that what those funny little badges you wear on your vests are for?"

"That's it."

"And do you really have secrets? And from whom are they secret? And do tell me what the secrets are! I'll never tell—honestly, I won't! How ridiculous it seems that boys should have secrets! They don't have such societies in the girls' colleges, anyway."

"Perhaps there are good and sufficient reasons," suggested Bert.

"Pray tell me what they are."

"Why, I don't know from experience, but I've heard it remarked that secrets were so common and such common property where girls are, that there wasn't any use in having the societies," said Bert.

"You know better than that; you know you do," responded Miss Bessie, sharply. "Now just tell me one of your secrets, and see whether I can keep it or not."

"It wouldn't be a secret, then, if I should tell you."

"Oh, yes, it would, for I'd never tell."

"Honor bright?"

"Honor bright. Now do let me take that cunning little badge."

Bert obediently unfastened his fraternity badge, and the eager-hearted girl at once pinned it upon her waist. "Now, then," she said, "tell me the secret. Give me the grip, too, so that I can show that I know."

"Now you see the very first thing you want to do is to get one of the secrets, so that you can tell it to some one else," said Bert, in apparent despair.

"Here comes Ben Dallett," said Miss Bes-

sie, quickly. "Give me the grip! Quick! Be quick! Does he belong to the same fraternity you do?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, show me the grip. How slow you are! Show me this minute!"

Thus bidden, Bert pretended to explain the mysterious greeting, and as soon as she had received it Miss Bessie turned to greet Ben, whose tall form loomed far above her, as he drew near.

"Why, Mr. Dallett," she exclaimed, "I'm delighted to see you!" And holding forth her hand, she grasped that of Ben in the peculiar manner in which Bert had just instructed her.

To her surprise and disgust, Ben apparently did not understand the meaning, and Miss Bessie declared, "I don't believe you belong to the fraternity I do, after all," and she pointed to the pin she was wearing.

"Bless my soul! I'd 'most forgotten," exclaimed Ben, as he entered into the joke.

"I believe you've been fooling me," said Miss Bessie. "I don't believe that's the grip of your society at all."

"Not exactly," said Ben. "If you'll wait a minute, I'll show you."

But Miss Bessie had become sceptical, and ready to return the favor she had received, she said demurely, "Why, Mr. Dallett, I believe you've grown two inches since last summer."

Ben's face flushed slightly, in spite of his effort to join in the laugh which followed. "There's nothing like getting up in the world," he said. "My motto is 'Excelsior,' and in these higher regions, where I carry my head, the air is better and purer and the vision is much broader, I can assure you all."

"You may recollect, my friend," suggested Bert, who was very sensitive as to the shortness of his own stature, "what the great English wit said."

"What did he say?" demanded Ben.

"Why, something about nature never erecting a building seven stories high without leaving the cock-loft empty."

"I believe I do recollect something of the kind," responded Ben, dryly. "At least, I'm not likely to forget it when you are near, Bert. How many times does that make, that you've got off that same old moth-eaten saying?"

"Not one too many. Constant reviewing is the only way to impress the truth."

"I say, Bert," retorted Ben, "did you ever hear of the man who started to erect a building, but he hadn't counted the cost, and so got only as far as the foundation? I'd rather be a cock-loft than a cellar."

"That's all right. Tastes differ," replied Bert, shouting and pretending that he was talking to some one far up in the sky.

"Tastes do differ," responded Ben, acting as if he was looking about in the ravine near by for the one to whom he was speaking.

All the company, including Bert and Ben, were laughing, and Miss Bessie said quickly, "You boys must stop your quarrelling. We've too much to do."

"I'm not quarrelling, am I, Ben?" shouted Bert, looking far up into the sky.

"No, you're not quarrelling; neither am I," retorted Ben, again pretending to be looking about on the ground for the pygmy that had addressed him.

"Then come on and help take these baskets down to the yacht," said Miss Bessie, as she grasped one of the bundles on the piazza and started toward the dock.

Her example was at once followed, and soon all the provisions were stored away in

the lockers, the party had assembled on deck, the word was given, and the beautiful little yacht steamed out upon the river.

Overhead the sun was shining with unusual brightness, and even the depths of the river were made light by the beams. The air was cool and bracing, and the delight and animation of all on board seemed to be mirrored in the scenes among which they moved. Beautiful islands, attractive cottages, boats filled with people bound upon an errand similar to their own were passed; and the greetings were responded to with a zest that clearly showed that the pleasures of the day were not confined to one party, however animated that might be. College songs rang out over the water, laughter and shouts awoke the slumbering echoes, and life, to all appearances, had no more clouds than did the clear blue of the summer sky above them. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, with that rare faculty that some people have of never outgrowing a youthful spirit, no matter how many years may have passed over their heads, entered into the enjoyment of the young people; and when at last the yacht, about noontime, came to anchor

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off a shaded and beautiful point on Grindstone Island, every one was ready to declare that such a day had never before been known.

As they landed, Jock said: "My father wrote me the other day that when he was a boy he lost his jack-knife in the water somewhere near here. He declared that he'd be greatly obliged to me if I'd get it and bring it back to him."

"There are a good many things that have been lost in this river, and some people will find them, or think they will, which is just as well," remarked Ben, soberly.

Both Bob and Bert looked up quickly as Ben spoke, and then glanced uneasily at each other. Had Ben, too, suspected the search which was being made for the lost cannon? His words certainly sounded suspicious, but the demure expression on his face was reassuring, though how little that might mean under certain conditions both boys fully understood. However, there was no opportunity for further questioning now, for the baskets must be carried ashore, and the improvised tables set up, and the various duties performed which pertained to

the coming dinner for which all were fully ready, we may be sure.

There was a rudely constructed fireplace, evidently having been used by others on former occasions; and Mr. Clarke explained that these were to be found at certain well-known spots among the islands, and were looked upon as common property by all the fishermen. Indeed, as he spoke, several skiffs could be seen approaching the islands from various directions, and it was evident that others also knew where to look for the camping places.

After a fire had been made from the fallen branches which were speedily gathered, Mrs. Clarke said: "We ought to have some fish for our dinner. I didn't know but the young gentlemen would kindly provide us with them."

"So we will," said Jock, quickly.

The three skiffs which the yacht had had in tow were speedily brought into service, and Mr. Clarke and the boys at once departed on their search, leaving Mrs. Clarke and the young ladies to make all other arrangements for the dinner.

About a half-hour afterward, a faint shout or call from the camp was heard by

Jock and Bob, who were in the same skiff, and not far distant from the place where they had landed.

"What's that? Hark!" demanded Jock, sharply.

Again the faint cry was heard, and the excited lad said: "There's something wrong back there. Let's pull up and start."

Quickly their lines were reeled in, and the skiff started swiftly homeward. Several times the call or cry was heard again, and Bob, who was rowing, each time increased his efforts. The light skiff responded, and but a brief time had elapsed when the boys were again within sight of the camp.

Then it became evident that something was indeed wrong. The young ladies and Mrs. Clarke were all on the shore, and as soon as they perceived the approaching skiff their shouts redoubled. They waved their handkerchiefs, and called and called again; and when at last the boat was run ashore, and the boys leaped out, they were convinced that they had made no mistake in heeding the cry and returning to the landing-place.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESCUE.

“WHAT is it? What’s wrong?” demanded the boys, excitedly, as they ran up the bank and joined the young ladies, whose alarm apparently had increased as they perceived their friends approaching.

“Oh, just look there! See that! Those dreadful creatures have spoiled everything!” exclaimed Miss Bessie, tearfully.

As the boys turned quickly about at her word, they beheld the cause of the turmoil. The tables which had been spread by the girls were now overturned, the dishes were scattered about on the grass, and all the tempting viands were either trampled in the ground or had been devoured. Ranged back of the tables a half dozen mild-eyed and astonished cattle were standing gazing at the group, and to all appearances wondering what all the commotion was about.

“The horrid things came right up to the

tables," explained Miss Bessie, who, with the other girls, now approached the camping-place, feeling somewhat reassured under the protection of the boys.

"Why didn't you drive them away?" said Bob, restraining the strong impulse to laugh which had arisen within him.

"We did try to, but they wouldn't go. We said 'Shoo! Shoo!' to them, but they weren't nearly as badly frightened as we were, and instead of their running, we were the ones to go. And all our dinner is gone, too."

"It's too bad," said Jock. "Perhaps we'll save something yet. They don't seem to have disturbed the fireplace or anything that was cooking."

"It was too hot there."

"They won't hurt anything now," said Jock, as he and Bob seized some sticks and drove the cows back among the trees. "Where are the men?" he inquired, as they rejoined their friends. "How did it happen that you were left alone here?"

"Why, they said if we'd watch the fire, they'd go out and get some fish for dinner, for they declared you boys wouldn't be able to catch any. And while they were gone

these savage creatures came right out of the woods and drove us away and ate up all our dinner, too."

"Did you think they were savage?" inquired Bob. "They wouldn't have harmed you. They're as mild and gentle as lambs. Didn't you notice how calm and peaceful the expression in their eyes was?"

"No, we didn't notice it!" retorted one of the girls, sharply. "Two of them just kept shaking their heads, and we were afraid they'd bite us."

"Bite?" laughed Jock. "If you'd been with us last summer, you'd have learned that a cow can't bite, for she has teeth only on one jaw."

As the girls looked incredulously at him, Jock continued: "It's a fact; for I got caught that way myself, by Ethan. You ought to have noticed the eye. You know it is considered the most perfect and beautiful eye in all the world, — except, of course, the eye of a young lady. Nothing is equal to that, though perhaps you didn't know it."

"Do you really mean to say they have the best eyes of all animals?"

"That's what the poets say. Perhaps

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you may recollect what Homer makes the highest compliment which can be given the Greek goddesses; that is to say, that they were 'ox-eyed.' "

"I've heard of that; but I'm sure I didn't think of it when these creatures came after us. And our dinner is gone, too."

"Not all of it," said Jock. "The corn and potatoes were too hot to be touched; and though I'm more grieved than you can be that some of your dinner is gone, we'll make up by our appetites what we lack in variety. I'm very sure there won't be any complaints heard from any one as to the lack at dinner time. Besides, the men will have some fish, too."

"Did you catch any?" inquired Miss Bessie.

"We were just going to, but the Macedonian cry from the camp was too much for us. I left a bass over there that must have weighed at least five pounds."

"That's where Jock usually leaves the large fish," remarked Bob, demurely.

"Where's that? Where were you?" inquired one of the girls, innocently.

"Why, he leaves them in the water. He thinks he'll take them out, but he's too

tender-hearted to do it, after all. He only catches the little ones."

"I was thinking," said Miss Bessie, "about what you said of the eyes of those cows. Were you joking when you said they were the most beautiful of all animals?"

"Indeed I was not."

"And you don't really think they would bite — I mean harm us?"

"What? The eyes?"

"No, no. The cattle, of course."

"No, they won't harm you, I'm sure."

"Then let us go and look at them. I think it will be perfectly fine."

"All right. Come on; they're close by. Yes, I can see them right over there," said Bob, pointing, as he spoke, to the cattle that had returned to the borders of the woods, and were standing watching the party.

Nor did they turn away as the young people drew near, but stood gazing at them as if they were expecting to be fed. With many expressions of alarm, the young ladies were at last persuaded to come still nearer, and even to hold forth some grass which Bob plucked for them.

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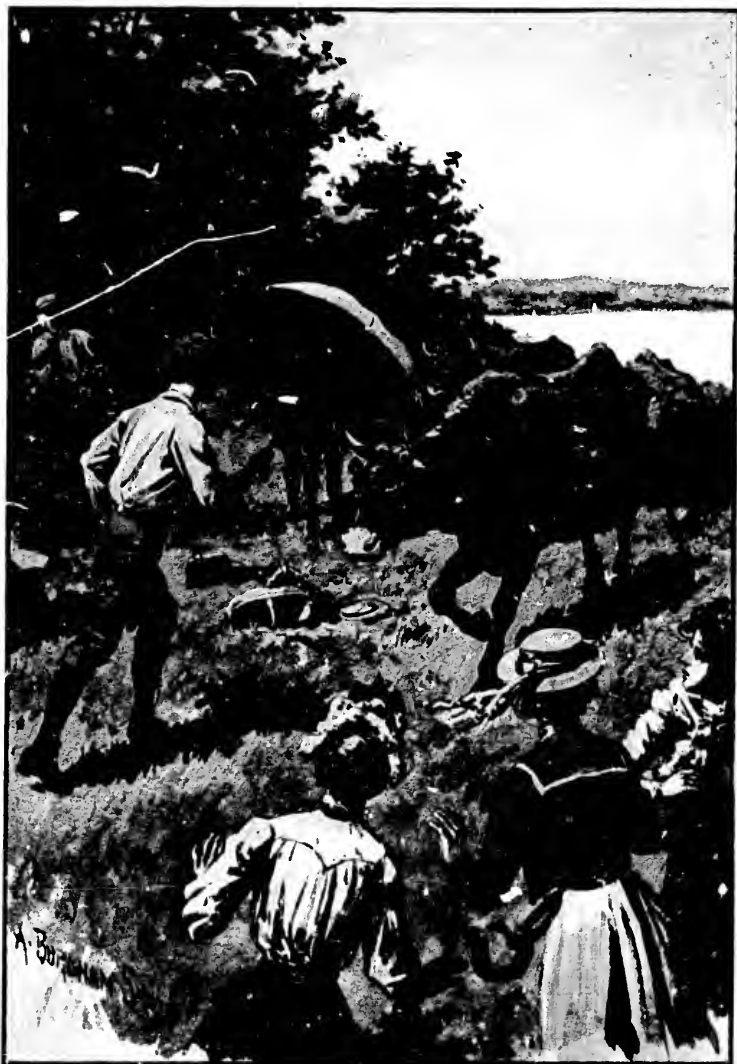
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"GET OUT OF THIS! GO BACK THERE!" Page 299.



with their long tongues attempted to seize the offered provender, but in almost every instance the blasts of their breath caused the girls timidly to draw back, and even to drop their gift; but the beautiful eyes of the patient creatures were nevertheless seen, and commented upon.

“We must go back now,” said one of the girls, at last. “I never had heard of the ‘ox-eye’ before, but I’ll not forget it.” As the party turned to walk back to the fire, one of the young ladies raised her parasol to protect herself from the flickering sunlight, which in places made its way even through the thick canopy of the leaves. This parasol, as it happened, was of a deep red hue, but all the party were ignorant that this particular color was distasteful to the “bovine cattle,” as Bob had termed them; and the first impression they received of that fact was the knowledge that the cows were following them, and, for some unexplained reason, were greatly excited.

“Here, let me take your parasol,” said Jock, innocently, as he seized the brilliant-hued sun umbrella, and waving it defiantly at the near-by cattle, shouted: “Get out of this! Go back there!”

Whether this action was looked upon in the light of a challenge or not, is not known, but instead of turning about, as they had previously done, the excitement in the little herd increased. One member was apparently particularly enraged, and lashing her sides with her tail, was lowering her head and pawing the earth, at the same time emitting a low bellow, which was far from reassuring to the girls, whose alarm had now returned.

“Girls, you run back to the shore,” said Bob, sharply, “while Jock and I drive the cows back.”

The girls obediently ran to the shore, and the boys advanced upon the foe, if such a name could be applied to a herd of a half-dozen domesticated kine, Jock still holding the flaming parasol, which he waved defiantly in the faces of the “ox-eyed” cattle, entirely innocent that by his very actions he was inflaming them still more.

Matters were indeed beginning to look serious, and Bob said in a low voice: “Drop that parasol, Jock, and we’ll make a break for that rail fence. You get a rail, and so will I, and we’ll see if we can’t beat back this horde of our foes.”

Jock was now in no mood for bantering, but he obeyed, and flinging the parasol upon the ground, ran swiftly with his friend to the low fence near by. No sooner had the boys started, however, than the cow which had been most enraged advanced upon the offending parasol, and tossed it into the air with her horns. As it fell to the ground, she made another rush upon it, and this time tossed it so high that it lodged in the overhanging branches of a near-by tree.

Gazing up at the battle-flag, for so it was plain she thought the brilliant sun umbrella to be, she pawed the earth and lashed her sides, all the time bellowing in her rage. Had it not been for the presence of the young ladies, and perhaps for the knowledge that they were looked to as the sole protectors, doubtless both Jock and Bob would have retired from the contest, well satisfied to prove that discretion was frequently the better part of valor; but with so many bright eyes watching them (they meant the eyes of the young ladies, and not the boasted "ox-eyes" this time) such a course of procedure was not to be thought of. Accordingly, with a fence rail

in the hands of each boy, they advanced to the attack.

As they shouted, all the cattle broke and fled into the woods, except the one which was evidently bent upon demolishing the red parasol. She was not to be moved by taunts or threats, and the boys were about to advance, when they were startled by a shout from the shore.

Looking up, they beheld the two boatmen, whom Mr. Clarke had brought on the yacht, now running swiftly toward them. In a moment, both men had arrived at the spot, and while one of them severely belabored the body of the poor cow with his fishing rod, the other mercilessly twisted her tail.

Thus beset, behind and on her flanks, the excited cow for the moment forgot the presence of the battle-flag in the branches, and with one defiant bellow, broke and fled; nor did she cease from her flight until she had regained her recent companions on the other side of the island. Then with his rod one man pushed the parasol from its resting-place, and catching it as it fell, he handed it to Bob, and said sharply:—

“Don't ye know any better'n that?”

"Better than what?" inquired Bob, quietly.

"Better'n to wave a red umbrella at a cow."

"No; I didn't know any better. What's wrong about it?"

"Why, any young one two years old ought to know more'n that. Red always riles cattle. It's a wonder she didn't poke her horn through you, instead of that umbrelly. Don't ye never do that again, never, no time, nowhere."

"I won't," said Bob, decidedly.

By this time they had returned to the shore and rejoined their friends, and with the passing of danger, the fear also had gone.

"The cows, it seems, object to the coior of your parasol," said Bob, as he restored that dilapidated article to its owner. "The boatmen say it's a wonder you got off as well as you did."

"It is a little too red," remarked the young lady, dubiously, as she sadly opened and closed the offending parasol, "but, I didn't know that the beasts of the fields had any such taste."

"Bessie snapped her camera at you three

times," said one of the girls. "She thinks she has a splendid picture of you when you were running for the fence. If it finishes up as well as she expects it to, she thinks of presenting a copy to your college, to preserve in its art collection."

"If you dare to let any of the fellows —" began Jock, quickly; but just then, catching a warning look from Bob, he suddenly stopped. It was better sometimes not to betray your real anxiety. And yet if by any chance his college friends should get hold of that picture, what a reception would be theirs on their return to college! Jock hardly dared to contemplate the scene.

"I think it will be a good picture," remarked Miss Bessie, dryly. "There's the background of the river, and the camp-fire, and the woods and all. And then there'll be two college boys fleeing for dear life, and then a rampant cow dancing on the ruins of Julia's parasol. If that won't make a moving picture, then I'm sure I don't know what will, for my part."

"But we were running to the fence to get some rails," said Jock, though he tried to laugh at the description Miss Bessie gave.

"That sounds well. It sounds better than it looked," she replied mischievously.

The conversation was interrupted by the return of Mr. Clarke and the remaining boys; but as far as fishing was concerned, they had had but slightly better success than Jock and Bob. However, the boatmen had secured a sufficient number for the dinner, and as the viands which had been cooking over the fireplace had not been molested by the cattle, a repast was soon prepared to which every one was ready to do ample justice.

The sounds of their merry laughter rang out over the water; and when at last the dinner had been eaten, and the company were seated on the bank beneath the shelter of the overhanging trees, with the wide expanse of the St. Lawrence before them, and the recollections of the exciting events of the morning banished for the time being, every one of the party was ready to declare that the loss of a part of the dinner had, after all, but added to the enjoyment of the day.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MASSACRE.

"I FANCY you have been combining pleasure with profit this summer, as you did a year ago," suggested Mr. Clarke, as a momentary lull came in the laughter and shouts of the merry party.

"Do you mean Bob's C's?" inquired Bert.

"That's one way of stating it," replied Mr. Clarke, with a smile.

"Well, we made Bob promise that he wouldn't bring a single volume of his cyclopædia along this summer."

"And I didn't," interrupted Bob.

"No, he didn't, that's a fact," acknowledged Bert; "but there's no rest for us, in spite of it. Bob takes us when we can't help ourselves, and then begins to lecture about some of those red fellows who were here something like a thousand years ago or more. For my part, I'm perfectly will-

ing to accept Bob's word that they were here, and let it go at that. I'm a good deal more interested in the people who are here now, this very summer, than I am in Frontenac or Phips or any of those old fellows. I'm up to date, in every respect." And as Bert spoke, he turned to one of the girls, as if he had given utterance to a sentiment that none would dare dispute.

"There's no true understanding of the present," said Mr. Clarke, "without also understanding the elements of the past that have helped to make it. When I employ a new man in my business, I always make it a point to find out something concerning his family as well. 'Blood tells' and 'What's bred in the bone will come out' are common maxims, and have a deal of truth in them, too. For my part, I think your friend Bob's effort to look up the history of this region, and then to impart the information he has gained, is very praiseworthy indeed."

"So do I, and so do we all," said Jock, quickly, feeling that he must come to the rescue of his friend. "Even Bert here likes it, talk as he will."

"I like it well enough," Bert acknowl-

edged. "The only thing I object to, is to have Bob practise on us. You see he's going to be a public man when he grows up, and he's just taking every chance he can get to use his embryo talents. The sufferings we have been compelled to endure, what tongue can declare?"

"Pity about you!" said Jock, half angrily; though he could not keep from laughing at the martyr-like expression and attitude assumed by the irrepressible Bert.

"I suggest that Bob give us some of his history now," suggested one of the girls.

"Can you begin anywhere?" inquired Mr. Clarke of Bob.

"Oh, yes; there's no difficulty as to that. My grandfather used to tell me that down in Maine the shipbuilders built their ships by the mile, and then cut them off at any length required. It's some such way with my history, I think."

"No trouble about beginning anywhere and any time," murmured Bert. "The only difficulty I ever perceived was in cutting it off."

"I don't intend to inflict myself on anybody," declared Bob.

As all the company now united in beg-

ging Bob to give at least a chapter from his historical story, the lad at last consented, and seated with his back against a tree, where he could face all before him, he began : —

“I’ve told the boys about the coming of Frontenac to New France, and of the troubles he had with the Jesuits, and how he was recalled by Louis after a few years, though perhaps he went back to France with his pockets a little heavier than when he first came over. Then I explained how it was that his two successors were not equal to the task, and how the troubles with the Indians and the English became so great that at last Frontenac was sent back here, and how, though he was an old man, his energy began at once to assert itself. He was trying to win back the friends among the red men whom his country had, to all appearances, lost, and at the same time teach his enemies—I mean, of course, the English and unfriendly tribes—a lesson they would not soon forget.

“Among the very first things he did was to form three war parties who were to move against the English settlements. One party was to start from Montreal, and

move against Albany, the second was to start from Three Rivers and make war upon the scattered settlers of New Hampshire, and the third was to start from Quebec and kill the unoffending people of Maine. As the one which was to go from Montreal was ready first, perhaps I'd better follow that, before I take up the others; though I have no doubt you know much more about this than I do," he added, speaking to Mr. Clarke.

"I'm deeply interested," replied Mr. Clarke. "Pray continue."

"There were over two hundred in this force, and not quite a hundred of them were so-called Christian Indians; but the name doesn't seem to sound very well when it is applied to them."

"I think they were as much Christian, or more, than the white men with whom they were going," said Mr. Clarke. "They didn't any of them appear to have a conception of Christianity as a life; it was more of the acceptance of certain statements, and submission to certain rites, than anything else."

"Well, they started out, anyway," resumed Bob. "The white men were, for

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the most part, *coureurs de bois* — the freebooters or outlaws I told you about, who were particular friends of Frontenac. It was in the middle of the winter —”

“What winter?” inquired Miss Bessie.

“The winter of 1690. They dragged their provisions on sledges over the snow and ice, and every man had the hood of his coat drawn over his head, and carried a gun, a knife, a hatchet, and a few other similar articles in his hands. After they had gone up Lake Champlain on the ice, they stopped and held a council. It seems Frontenac had not told them they must attack Albany, but had left that somewhat to their own judgment; though it was pretty generally understood that Albany was the place they were bound for.

“The Indians didn't like that idea very well, for they'd already been taught two or three pretty good lessons by the Albany soldiers, and the Frenchmen tried to show them that they were bound to regain their lost 'honor,' and all that sort of thing. The Indians didn't seem to be very eager to hunt for that somewhat vague quality, but the march was soon resumed. A thaw — January thaw, probably — set in, and

they had to march through slush that was knee-deep. It took them eight days to reach the Hudson, and a good deal of the desire to avenge their honor had evaporated by that time, so Albany wasn't heard of quite so often. When they came to the spot where the trail divided,—one part leading to Schenectady and the other to Albany,—they very quickly decided to go to Schenectady."

"Were they the first ones to sing that classical song about 'fifteen miles from Schenectady to Troy'?" inquired Bert, in mock solemnity.

"They were the first tramps, though perhaps I don't know as much as you do about the songs tramps sing," responded Bob. "It was a hard tramp they had of it, anyway; and when nine more days had gone, they were still six miles from the little settlement. You see, Schenectady was the very outermost post the English had at that time, and that really was more Dutch than English. The thaw had now gone, and the weather had become intensely cold.

"Just then they stumbled on a wigwam, and found four Iroquois squaws in it, and at once captured them."

"Brave lads!" shouted Bert, sitting quickly erect and clapping his hands. "To march all the way from Montreal was worth that, I'm sure."

"There was a fire in the wigwam," resumed Bob, ignoring the interruption, "and of course the half-frozen men crowded into it."

"What! The whole two hundred of them?" demanded Bert.

"You mustn't ask too many questions," laughed Bob. "I'm only giving you what the historians say. One of the Frenchmen made a speech, and exhorted his fellows to wash out their wrongs in blood, and all that sort of thing; though what wrongs the poor half-frozen fellows had suffered, I don't believe they themselves could have told. The man whom they had sent ahead to reconnoitre soon returned, and explained that they were near the end of their journey; so they planned to fall upon Schenectady at two o'clock the next morning. But it was too cold for them to stay where they were and wait, so, making the squaws show them the way, they started at once. The snow was blowing and the wind was howling; but they managed, somehow, to get

across the Mohawk on the ice, and started through the drifts toward the little settlement.

“Schenectady, like a good many of the other settlements, was not in the best of conditions. You see, the men were Dutchmen, for the most part; and as I have before remarked, the colonists were ranged, some on the side of King James, and some stood up for William and Mary. They ought to have agreed in guarding the place, but they ‘laughed to scorn,’ so to speak, the advice of the leader, Glen, to keep a guard. They left the gates wide open; and to show their contempt for leader and foe alike, made two snow men near the entrances, and laughingly declared that they should be their guards.

“The people were all asleep, as all good people are, or ought to be, at that time of the night; and without a gun having been fired, the invaders just surrounded the place. Then the signal was given, and with a screech and a scream they rushed on to the settlement. They battered down the doors, and shot or clubbed the half-dazed people who rushed out into the night. I’ve often thought since I read the account of it, what

an awful night that must have been. The sound of the guns, the warwhoop of the savages, the blow of the tomahawk, the thrust of a knife, wherever the distracted people rushed! Not even the women and children were spared, though not one of the Indians in the settlement was harmed, and there were thirty of them, you know.

“Well, for two hours the massacre was kept up, and though a few of the Schenectady men tried to make a stand, they couldn't really do much; and only a few, a very few, contrived to get away, and started through the storm for Albany. Sixty of the innocent people had been slain; and with about ninety prisoners, the victorious band, their ‘honor’ now having been avenged, started on their return to Montreal.

“A small band in the morning crossed the river to the house where Glen was. He had summoned all his servants and friends; and as the place had loop-holes and palisades, he was at first determined to hold out, hoping, of course, that help would come from Albany. The Frenchmen promised him that they wouldn't ‘hurt even a chicken

of his,' if he would give up; and so after he had made them lay aside their arms, he let them enter. You see, several times in former years Glen had saved the lives of some of the French from the Mohawks, after they had been captured, and they were going to pay up all their old scores now. So they spared him and all his relatives, — though the Indians were very much disgusted at the number of these, for I fancy Glen stretched his family mantle pretty wide that day; and even refusing to burn two or three houses that were his, the invaders left the rest of Schenectady in ashes, and with their booty and prisoners, and with horses now to draw their sledges, they made good time for Canada.

“A lot of the soldiers and Indians followed the Frenchmen and their friends, who, when they had come almost within sight of Montreal, naturally thought all danger of pursuit was past. They were almost worn out, they had been in such haste to get back, and had even eaten the most of their horses for food. But right there, almost within sight of home, as I said, the avengers fell upon them, and killed several, and took a number of prisoners,

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who made matters worse by saying that Frontenac was surely going to fall upon Albany.

“Of course the English and the Mohawks, who hated the French, were terribly aroused. Matters were made worse by the reports which came from the massacres inflicted by the other two forces that Frontenac had sent into New Hampshire and Maine; and Schuyler, the governor at Albany, urged the New England people to join him in crushing the French.

“The New Englanders had had about all of fighting the Indians they wanted, for King Philip’s War hadn’t been ended more than a dozen years; but the stories that came now from Maine and New Hampshire were too strong to be resisted, and so this man Phips, of whom I told you the other day, came into prominence as a leader of the Eastern forces. But I’ve told you enough for one time, and I’m going to stop right here and now.”

“I didn’t know Frontenac was that kind of a man,” murmured Miss Bessie.

“He was pretty much like all the others of his time, only he had a little more energy and go to him,” said Mr. Clarke. “Per-

haps Bob will tell us some more another day. It certainly is an interesting story. It's time now for us to go on board the yacht again."

The party instantly responded, and after a delightful sail among the islands, just at dusk the boys were landed at their house-boat, where the two boatmen had supper waiting for them.

"To-morrow you'll go with me?" inquired Bert of Bob that evening.

"Yes."

"You know more than you'll own to," said Bert.

"You'll know more yourself, to-morrow," replied Bob, dryly, as he prepared to retire for the night.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LESSON.

It was long before the house-boat was astir, on the following morning, when Bob and Bert took one of the skiffs and set forth on an expedition which it was evident they desired to keep secret from their fellows. Even Jed was unaware of the project, fondly believing that only one of the boys was aware of the search for the shotted cannon which he hoped was to be made.

Bob, who was rowing, pulled quietly at the oars, and assisted, as he was, by the strong current of the river, soon passed behind one of the islands, and so was effectively concealed from the sight of those who had been left behind. His confidence was now somewhat restored, and glancing demurely at his friend who was seated in the stern of the skiff, he said, "You are an attractive looking bird, Bert."

"It's the early bird that puts in the fine work, you know," replied Bert, his teeth chattering, for the air of the early morning was cool.

"I would that your friends might behold you now."

"I'm satisfied as it is."

Bert was clad in a bathing suit, and, in the chill of the early morning air, naturally was not over warm. He had brought with him a light overcoat, and drawing this more closely about him, endeavored to assume an air of comfort which, if the truth was known, he was far from feeling.

"I don't just see what it is that makes you so eager," said Bob.

"Gold, Bob, gold. If Phips could find it, so can we."

"You haven't made many discoveries as yet."

"I've found *you* out, and that's something. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Bob—I wouldn't, for a fact. The idea that you would go into a scheme of this kind and leave your friends outside! It's beyond belief, that's what it is."

"I don't seem to have left one out," remarked Bob, quietly.

"Do you mean me? Well, all I can say is, that it isn't any fault of yours that I am where I am. You'd have gone alone if I hadn't been too sharp for you."

"It isn't every one that can get ahead of you, Bert, that's a fact."

There was a quizzical expression on Bob's face that might have boded no good to his companion, had not Bert been so engrossed in his own elation that he was apparently unmindful of all else; but as it was, Bert failed to see it, and his suspicions were therefore not aroused.

For a time neither of the boys spoke, and the skiff swept swiftly on down the river. There was an exhilaration in the bracing air of the early hour. The songs of the birds were heard in the trees and shrubbery of the islands as the boys passed, and the hue of the water was beautiful beyond description. The silence that rested over the river was unbroken by the presence of man, and it seemed as if, for a time at least, the region had relapsed into its primitive condition, such as it had known long before the coming of Cartier or Frontenac, or the more modern explorer, who was known in the vernacular of the border

as "the summer boarder." Occasionally, in the distance, the whirl of some fish could be seen, as he rose to the surface to seize "the early worm" or venturesome minnow, and so make his breakfast before the fishermen had started on their daily quest. There was a deeper green in the shade of the trees, the very air was instinct with the coming day, and the peace and quiet of the majestic river were never so impressive to the boys as in that early hour.

At least, so thought Bob, who half dreamily continued his rowing, only occasionally lifting his eyes to gaze shrewdly at his companion. What his thoughts were, was not evident from any word he spoke; and the eager lad with him was so engrossed with the purpose for which he, at all events, had set forth, that he had slight inclination to become suspicious of the designs under which Bob had permitted him to accompany him at the time.

"How's the weather now?" inquired Bob, at last.

"The weather? Why, it's all right. It's a perfect day," responded Bert, innocently.

"The temperature, I mean. Do you feel cold?"

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"I've been warmer," Bert admitted, striving as he spoke to prevent his teeth from making such a commotion.

"We can go back to the house-boat if you want to. The fellows won't be up yet, and no one will know what you've been up to."

"You can't get rid of me in any such way. I've started to test your scheme, and I'll know more about it before we go back."

Bert spoke decidedly, but Bob was not to be deceived by the apparent determination of his friend. Bert of all the boys was the one to be most easily discouraged, and his strongest hope was that after the plan he had in mind had been put to the test, Bert, of his own free will, would abandon all further efforts, and so leave him free to make further investigations of his own. The more phlegmatic Bob, sturdy and not easily diverted from a course of action upon which he had entered, was sufficiently interested now to have formed the resolution to go on. The sight of what might prove to be a sunken cannon had strengthened his purpose, but he was in no wise minded to have even Bert share the search

with him until a more thorough examination had been made. It would be ample time to inform the others when the cannon had indeed been found; and if, on the other hand, as was not unlikely, the whole matter should prove to be one born of Jed's imagination, no one knew better than Bob from what he would be saved, in case of failure, by the lack of knowledge on the part of his comrades.

Meanwhile, as Bert had discovered enough to make him troublesome if he should be ignored or turned aside, there was nothing to be done except to permit him to go on, as he seemed to be determined to do. But Bob had no idea of permitting his friend, at this stage, to know more than he thought ought to be known by him. He would not openly oppose him, but there were other means, just as effective and far less perilous, which might be employed, and so Bob was not discourage

The skiff was now near the spot where Bert had discovered him two days before this time, and well aware that Bert also would recognize the locality, Bob said, —

“We're close on the trail now.”

“So I see.”

"Perhaps we'd better go a little farther down the river."

"No, sir!" replied Bert, emphatically. "You aren't going to throw me off the track by any such trick as that. I believe in you, but I'm afraid of you, too. It was right here you were, when I was watching you the other day."

"Sure?"

"Yes, sure."

"My advice would be to go a little farther down the river."

The true place was indeed several rods below that where they were; but as Bob perceived that any suggestion to row to another locality only intensified his friend's determination to remain where they were, he had no fear of referring to the other spot.

"Can't see very well this morning," said Bob, glancing over the side of the skiff as he spoke. "There's just wind enough to ruffle the water."

"This is the place," said Bert, firmly. "'Sink or swim, survive or perish,' here I go."

As he spoke, Bert divested himself of his overcoat and stood up in the skiff, clad, as has been said, in his bathing suit.

"Pretty cold," suggested Bob.

"Bother the cold. I don't feel it."

"Don't you think you'd better put off till to-morrow what ought not to be done to-day?" inquired Bob, solemnly.

"No, sir. Here goes. Keep the skiff right here, and I'll be up in a minute or two."

"I think you will," said Bob to himself. "What a pity it is that I'm so poor a swimmer," he said aloud.

"Never mind that. You do your part and I'll do mine. Now, then, keep her steady." And hesitating a moment, Bert leaped into the water, and disappeared from sight.

A longer period elapsed than Bob thought it possible for any one to remain beneath the surface before Bert appeared again, puffing and blowing the water from his mouth, and shaking his head as a dog might have done.

Bert was thoroughly at home in the water, and it was this fact which had led him to choose the course he was now following.

"Did you find it? Did you see anything of the cannon?" inquired Bob, in mock eagerness.

"Not this time," replied Bob, as he clambered on board, almost overturning the skiff in his efforts.

"What do you get in here for?" demanded Bob, sharply. "Why don't you rest by taking hold of the skiff, and then let go and go down?"

"Because I want to dive. Here I go again," and once more Bert disappeared in the water.

His second attempt was not rewarded any better than the first had been, and Bob said, "Is your ardor cooled? Dampened, so to speak?"

"Nay, verily," and the excited lad again was lost to sight.

Repeated efforts brought no better success, and it became evident that Bert's enthusiasm was fast departing. The water was cold, and though a cold bath might be all right in its place, it was evident that even the best of things might be overdone.

"Want to go back now?" inquired Bob.

"No," replied Bert, with chattering teeth.

"Perhaps we'd do better to go farther down the river," suggested Bob, though he was not entirely without fear that his words might be heeded.

“Not much!” retorted Bert, his suspicions instantly returning, now that his friend wanted him to abandon his efforts.

“All right, have it your own way.”

“It seems to me that’s just what I am having, and not much besides.”

“Haven’t you seen anything of a cannon?”

“Not exactly.”

“What do you mean by ‘not exactly’? Have you seen anything that looked as if it might be one?”

“Just row about ten feet farther up stream,” replied Bert. “I want to try it there.”

“It shall be done, my lord. You have but to command, and it is done.”

As soon as the skiff was motionless again, Bert repeated his efforts; but success was apparently as far distant as before, when he once more returned to the surface. Nor did the half-dozen other descents into the river meet with any better returns.

“Don’t be discouraged,” said Bob, glibly. “Perseverance and all that sort of thing, you know. Don’t give it up, but keep it up.”

Bert made no reply, though once more

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he disappeared in the water, this time making an extreme effort to remain on the bottom, and look about him. When he resumed his seat in the skiff, even Bob was moved by the evident distress of his friend; but as he was desirous that the lesson of the morning should be complete, he did not refer to that, and simply said:—

“When you’ve had enough, say so. I thought perhaps you’d bring up the canon with you this time.”

“I-I-I ought to-to q-quit, I sup-p-p-ose,” chattered Bert.

“Why don’t you, then, if you ought to?”

“I g-g-guess I w-w-will. I-I-I w-w-wish I had a-a f-f-furnace h-h-ere, or s-s-some-thing hot.”

“I’m not in the least cold,” said Bob, soothingly. “I don’t just see what it is that makes you so chilly.”

“G-g-get d-d-down there in the b-b-b-bot-
tom of the S-s-st. Lawrence, a-and y-y-ou’ll
f-f-feel it, if you c-c-can’t see it.”

“Isn’t there something I can do for
you? It grieves me to see you sit there
chattering like—like—”

“Y-y-yes t-theres something y-y-you
c-can d-do.”

“What is it? I’ll do it gladly, willingly, eagerly, fondly, longingly, with pleasure and delight, with joy unspeakable —”

“I-t’s t-to s-s-shut your teeth t-t-together so tight t-that a w-word can’t g-g-g-get out,” Bert managed to ejaculate.

“I’ll do all but that. That I cannot do.”

“Then l-l-let me t-t-take those oars a-a-and g-g-get warm.”

“Wouldn’t you rather have these?” and as he spoke, Bob drew forth a bundle of clothing, tied with a bath-towel, and handed it to his friend.

“Y-y-you’re a good boy, Bob. I-I n-n-never thought of that.”

“Well, I did; now take them and go up behind those bushes, and put some dry clothes on.”

Bert was speedily landed, and as soon as he was concealed from sight, Bob picked up his oars, and began to row swiftly and silently away from the island.

As soon as he was satisfied that he could not be seen, he said slowly to himself: “It cuts me to the heart, to be compelled to leave Bert there; but I’m doing it for his good, as my mother used to say to me upon divers occasions and sundry times,

that are deeply impressed in my memory. It's too bad to see so bright and promising a youth, so mad after gold. Nothing will avail for him, except a season of fasting and meditation. Yes. I'm acting solely for his good, and some day he'll see it in its true light, and bless me for my thoughtfulness. If you don't check this madness early in its career, it may be everlastingly too late."

Just then the faint sound of a shout came from the direction of the island where the subject of his meditation had been left.

"Ah, yes. Even now he seems to be coming to himself," murmured Bob, as he still continued to row leisurely toward the camp. "Just listen to that," he added, as the shout was repeatedly heard. "Just hear his sighs and groans. His cries are indeed agonizing, even heart-rending. I trust I never shall be bitten with this money madness. No cure for it, but fasting and meditation, either. His conscience must be tearing its way out," he added grimly, as the tone of the shouter decidedly changed. "At any other time, I might be led to think that Bert was angry, but as it is, I am sure his fasting and meditation

are getting in their fine work, particularly the fasting. Poor lad! I'm eager to see him clothed, and in his right mind; but I must deny myself that privilege, for it's getting late, and I want my breakfast."

And Bob began to row swiftly toward the house-boat, which now was not far distant.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE CAMP-FIRE.

WHEN Bob rejoined his companions they were seated at the breakfast-table, and his arrival was greeted with many bantering words, to which he made no reply.

"Where's Bert?" demanded Ben. "We haven't seen him this morning."

"Why, isn't he here?" replied Bob, in well-feigned surprise.

"No. There must be something up when Bert doesn't come to breakfast. He can't be off the island, for the other skiff is here."

"Strange," murmured Bob, as he seated himself beside his friends, and began to attack the viands before him, a task for which his feelings made him ready, we may be well assured.

The continued absence of Bert was a cause of much comment, but Bob volunteered no information, simply expressing

his opinion that the missing boy was not far away, and that he would soon appear. The others were by no means so confident; but with Bob's promise to look him up, they were made content, and soon after breakfast the parties started upon the expeditions of the day.

Bob had contrived to have Jed assigned to him as boatman, and promising that he would speedily report to the others if no trace of Bert was found, they all set forth on their way. As Ethan and the other two boys had explained where they were to fish, there would be no difficulty in finding them in case they were needed. Bob had filled a basket with a goodly supply of provisions; and giving the word to Jed, his skiff was soon moving swiftly down the river, in the direction of the island where Bert had been left for his "season of fasting and meditation."

It was not long afterward when Bert was perceived standing on the shore, waving his hands, and excitedly calling upon his friends to come to his aid. Jed, who had not been informed of the suspicions and present predicament of Bert, was at a loss to understand what it all meant; but

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he heeded Bob's words, who had directed him to let him land, and promised to go out of sight down the river, and return in the course of an hour.

Taking the luncheon in his hand, Bob quickly leaped ashore, and despite the protests of Bert, pushed back the skiff into the strong current, and before either of the boys could say much, both Jed and the boat had disappeared from sight.

Bert was angry, Bob had no difficulty in perceiving that, before a word had been uttered. "That's a smart trick you played on me!" exclaimed Bert, indignantly.

"What trick? What are you talking about?"

"About your leaving me here."

"Clothed; but not yet in his right mind," murmured Bob, pretending to be interested in something he had discovered out on the river.

"I didn't believe you'd ever do that," said Bert, reproachfully.

"Do what?"

"Leave me here in the cold, and without a mouthful of breakfast."

Without replying, Bob opened the basket in his hand and held it forth to his

friend. Hunger was stronger than Bert's feeling of anger, and quickly taking the basket, he began to eat as if food had not been seen for a long time.

As he ate, Bob watched him, and his eyes twinkled as he perceived that Bert's anger was rapidly disappearing, though the lad still strove to keep up his apparent indignation. It was difficult for Bert long to hold to any one line of thought or action, and when at last all the food had disappeared, still striving to appear angry, he turned to Bob and said : —

“ Now explain yourself, Bob.”

“ I've nothing to explain.”

“ What did you leave me here for ? ”

“ For to dress, and a few other things.”

“ Well, I'm dressed.”

“ So I've noticed.”

“ Are you satisfied now ? ”

“ I've been satisfied all the time.”

“ Well, what are we here for then ? Why don't we clear out ? ”

“ Clear out ? I thought you'd be ready to go on with the search for those shotted cannon. You're a good diver, Bert. I've seldom seen better.”

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again?" demanded Bert, with a shudder, as he glanced toward the scene of the morning labors.

"Why, yes. Wasn't that what you wanted? I thought you said that the one ambition of your life was to come out here with me and help find the cannon. Jed isn't here, and there's no one to molest or make us afraid. You can put on that bathing suit and keep it up till noon. Jed'll be back by that time, and I'll take him and the skiff and go back to the house-boat and bring you some luncheon, then this afternoon you can try it again and I'll bring you your supper. You won't want too many interruptions, I know, and perhaps ten o'clock will be as late as we ought to keep at it."

"'We' keep at it?" demanded Bert, sharply. "What have *you* had to do, I'd like to know?"

"If you'd seen the trouble I've had to keep the other fellows away, you wouldn't be asking me such questions as that. 'Nobody knows the trouble I've had.'"

"Oh, well, it isn't worth while to keep at it. We've found out about all there is to be learned, I fancy."

"You don't mean to say you've had enough!" exclaimed Bob, in mock surprise.

"Yes. I think I'm satisfied."

"Oh, no. Let's keep it up all day. The other fellows have gone up to Eel Bay, and we shan't be disturbed. We must use the present, my boy; 'never put off till the morrow what ought to be done to-day.'"

"That's all well enough for you to talk," retorted Bert. "I'll keep it up, too, if you'll just put on that bathing suit and prowl around on the bottom of the river. I'll hold the ropes and let *you* go down, so to speak."

"I can't swim well enough for that. It's easier and better for me to take the direction of the affair. If you remember aright, you'll recall that you were the one to suggest that you would do the diving. It wasn't my proposition."

"Well, I've done my duty, then. The cannon may stay where they are, for all that I'll do to get them up."

"Don't be so easily discouraged. Keep at it, keep everlastingly at it, that's my motto every time."

"So I see, when it's some one else who's to do the diving."

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"We can't all be divers."

"Some of us won't, then; and that's all there is to be said."

"Do you really mean to say that you want to drop it?"

"I do that."

"Just think of all that French gold."

"I have thought of it," and Bert's teeth began to chatter at the recollection.

"And you honestly want to drop out of it and lose your share?"

"I wouldn't go down there again for all the gold in the St. Lawrence."

"Well, then, Bert," said Bob, sharply, "there's just one thing more I want you to do."

"What's that?"

"I'm not very fearful that you will refer to your diving experiences; but I want you to keep the whole thing to yourself — gold and all."

"All right. I won't speak of it to a living soul."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

Bob instantly arose, and placing a finger in his mouth, whistled shrilly, and in response to his hail Jed was seen approach-

ing with the skiff. Both boys were soon in their places on board, and for the remainder of the day devoted their entire attention to the fishing.

They were well satisfied with their efforts when, as the dusk appeared, they slowly made their way back to the house-boat where their friends had already arrived. The coming of Bert was hailed with delight, but in response to the eager questions of his friends he volunteered no explanation, except to say that he had not been far away, and that Bob and Jed had taken him on board their skiff very soon after they had departed from the house-boat. Perhaps all were too wearied with the sport of the day to make further inquiries, for at all events the matter was dropped, and no reference was again made to it.

For nearly two weeks the house-boat was kept in its place, and daily the boys departed in different directions with the boatmen in search of sport, which was easily found. Fish were plentiful, and the sailing among the myriads of islands never lost its zest. Jock's mother had long since come to the river, and a part of almost every day was spent by her on the house-boat.

The keen enjoyment of the company, and the enthusiasm of her own boy, were sufficient to arouse her own delight; and for all, the summer days passed all too quickly.

Bert had not once referred to the hidden cannon, but Bob was in no mind to abandon the attempt to discover them. Repeatedly he and Jed had sought the place where the vision of the cannon on the bottom of the river had been seen; but despite all their efforts, not once had they been able to obtain a glimpse of the concealed weapon. Whether they had made a mistake in the locality, or they had been deceived in the appearance of something they had taken for a great gun, they could not decide. There was, however, no abatement of their zeal, for both were determined to continue the search to the end.

It was at this time that an invitation came to the boys to be present at a "camp-fire" which was to take place at "The Rocks," Mr. Clarke having volunteered to send his yacht to convey them to his home, and also promising that it would return them the same evening to the house-boat. Not just understanding what a "camp-fire" was, their uncertainty, as well as certain

other things which were by no means "uncertain," would of themselves have caused them to accept; and when, at the appointed time, the yacht came for them, they were as surprised as pleased to learn that both boatmen were also included in the invitation.

On their way a stop was made at the place where Mrs. Cope was staying, and with the addition to the little party the yacht sped on, and soon all were safely landed at "The Rocks."

The appearance of Mr. Clarke's summer home was as unique as it was beautiful. Chinese lanterns were hanging from the trees, and the grounds were ablaze with light. It was a merry group which had already assembled, and the greetings bestowed upon the latest arrivals were of a character that certainly made them feel that they were welcome. People whose homes were on neighboring islands had also come, and altogether the sight was one that would have aroused the interest and pleasure of any who beheld it.

The "camp-fire" was soon discovered to be a huge fireplace, enclosed on three sides, which had been erected in a sheltered spot among the rocks. In this huge logs had

been piled, and when at last the company was assembled before it, and the fire started, the wildness and weirdness of the spectacle increased. The flames leaped and roared, the flickering lights and shadows were cast far out over the water, and the sounds of the shouts and laughter of the assembly rose over all.

Here corn was popped and "fudge" was made, and various other indigestible viands served, to which all did ample justice, we may be sure. Some of the people were seated in camp-chairs, others reclined or sat upon the surrounding grass, and all the time the fire roared and the smoke was borne far out over the river.

After a time, it was explained that a "story" was expected from every one present. This was an aspect of the case not altogether enjoyable, in prospect at least, and several declared their inability to respond. As one after another related an experience had upon the river, or recited a poem, or told of a tradition pertaining to the region, it was discovered that there was ample material for the tales that must be told.

"Here's Jed," said Mr. Clarke, at last.

“He’s lived all his life upon the river, and I’m sure he knows a story worth telling.”

Jed, in no wise abashed by the summons, at once related the story of the vast number of suckers his boy and the young descendant of “Sairy Thorn” had recently secured; and though it was a twice-told tale to our boys, they laughed as heartily as they had done when they had first heard it.

Ethan then was called upon to add his contribution. At first the worthy boatman demurred, but at last, after having been urged sufficiently, and evidently not meaning to be outdone by his rival, he began; and as the interest of his hearers became more manifest, the tale itself seemed to increase in magnitude.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE STORY OF PHIPS.

"THIS story," began Ethan, "is about somethin' that happened years ago, when I was a boy ; for if I recollect aright, it was in '53."

"1653, Ethan?" inquired one of the boys, mischievously.

"No, 1853. The' was a party surveyin' the Black River. There was a lot o' men, an' they had a lot o' their funny things what they survey with. I used to watch 'em, wonderin' what they peeked through that little spy-glass for, an' what they had chains for, too ; for I couldn't see then, any more'n I can now, why a tape measure or a rope wouldn't do jest ezactly as well. However, they had all the fixin's, an' they wouldn't more'n get across the river in one spot afore they'd want to go back an' try it on the other side. Back an' forth, an' up an' deown, they kept at it, for I s'pose

they wanted to put in the time somehow or other, an' besides, it made work for some o' the men hereabouts. There was my Uncle Nate for one; he got twelve shillin' a day, six days in the week, for nigh on to two months, an' everything he had to do was jest to carry a chain 'long with the fellows that had the three-legged arrangement with a little spy-glass on top of it.

"Well, one time they was out in the river on a raft. They'd wanted to cross over, an', as luck would have it, there wasn't a boat anywhere near, for the men with the skiffs were all waiting for the party about a mile farther up stream. So these surveyin' chaps made up a raft, and tried to cross over to the other bank on that. But after they got out in the river they found that they couldn't touch bottom nowhere with the pole they had, an' to make matters worse, they discovered pretty quick that their old raft was caught in the current, an' whether they liked it or not, they was being carried deown stream like two-forty.

"Charlie Brodhead was the leader o' the gang, an' it wasn't long afore he was scared out o' his seven senses. On an' on went

the old raft, an' of course the men went along with it; an' purty quick they could see that the current was gettin' swifter an' swifter, an' then they began to hear the roar o' the falls deown below. They all knew they was in for it, then, and Brodhead, he told 'em that every man had got to swim for his life, for the raft was puttin' straight for the falls, an' if they didn't get ashore somehow, an' purty quick, they'd all go over the rocks.

"Everybody could swim except one, though some o' 'em wasn't experts at it, I'm thinkin'. The fellow who couldn't swim a stroke was a young Frenchman named Pharoux, though the name isn't spelled a bit as it's pronounced. Beats all heow folks pronounce some o' the names in this part of the country. But Pharoux was thinkin' o' somethin' besides the way his name was spelled, an' he began to beg like a whitehead for the men not to leave him; though I don't see what good he thought they could do if they stayed, except to keep him from bein' lonesome-like.

"Finally, most o' the men lit out and jumped into the water. Those on 'em what couldn't swim much managed to get

hold o' the raft again, an' so kept on with Pharoux and Brodhead; for Charlie Brodhead had made up his mind that he'd stand by the young Frenchman, come what might. All this time the raft was jest a goin' it deown the stream, an' the Frenchman was a screechin' an' beggin' some one to help him, an' the men was wild with excitement, an' those o' 'em whose mouths wasn't full o' water was a shoutin' and a callin' like mad.

“By an' by the raft came right plump up to the falls, an' then seemin' to stop an' deliberate a minute, it just settled deown an' took a jump-like, an' pitched straight over for the eddies an' whirlin' water an' rocks deown below. The whole thing could be seen by the men who'd managed to get ashore, an' louder than the roar o' the river was the dyin' screech o' some o' the poor fellows that had by this time disappeared from sight.

“Those who had managed to get ashore rushed areound below the falls, jest as quick as they could get there, an' pulled Charlie Brodhead out of a eddy, where he was whirlin' round like a top, as if he had somehow got a goin' an' couldn't stop—as I

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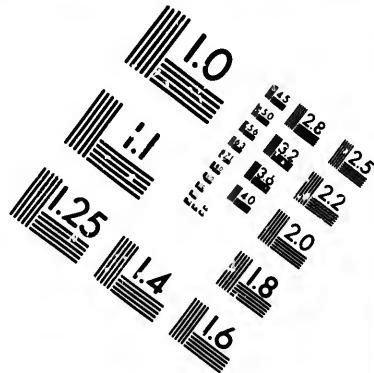
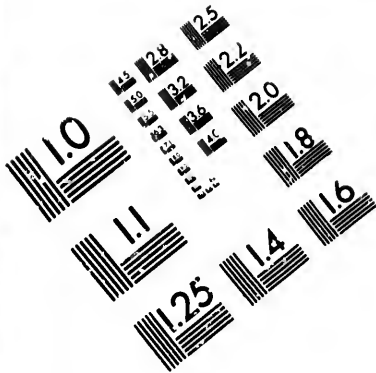
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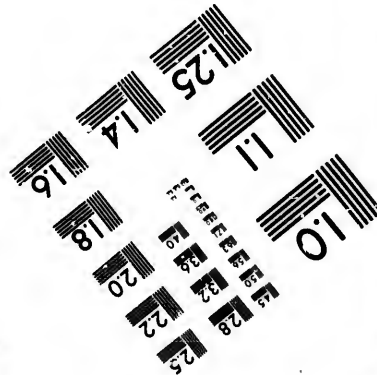
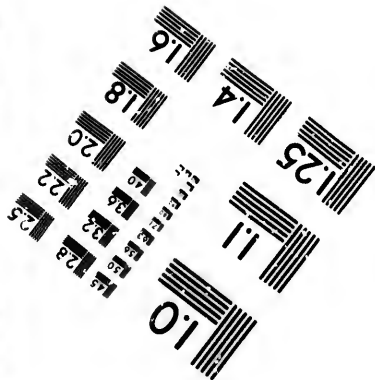
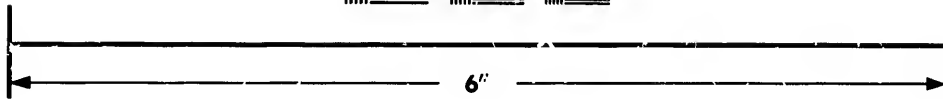
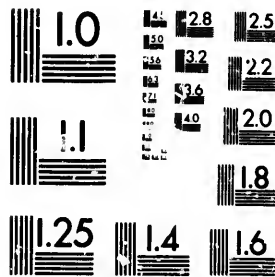


THE WHOLE THING COULD BE SEEN BY THE MEN WHO'D MANAGED
TO GET ASHORE. Page 348.





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guess he couldn't, for a fact. He didn't know anything when they got him ashore, but after a spell he came areound all right again. But some o' the white men an' a few o' the Indians—for there was several Indians in the party—was drowned. Jest drowned dead. They searched an' searched for the young Frenchman, Pharoux, but it was a long time afore they found him; an' then it was on an island away deown by the mouth o' the river. But he was dead, too. They put up a marble tablet on that island, an' named the island for him; but it didn't keep him from goin' over Beach River Falls. Lots o' times folks don't seem to wake up an' do anything for a man afore he's gone so far away he can't come back to see heow much his friends and neighbors thought o' him. Nobody never named no island for me, an' I don't suppose nobody ever will."

"Did you ever see the inscription on the tablet, Ethan?" inquired Mr. Clarke.

"Yes."

"Do you recollect what it is?"

"Yes. It says, 'To the memory of Peter Pharoux this island is consecrated.'"

"I don't suppose we shall ever realize

the perils and hardships of the men who first opened up this, or any other country," said one of the party.

"Very likely not," responded Mr. Clarke; "but it's very difficult to estimate accurately or justly the events that are close to us. It's like holding a photograph so close to our eyes that we can't perceive the outlines. We have to get a perspective before the men and their deeds can be seen aright. Perhaps it's like the Chinese pictures. You know they all seem to be flat, and a man and a tree are very much alike. They don't seem ever to have discovered the sense of proportion or the power of perspective; and I fancy it's something like that in our views of the men and events of our times. After they've gone, and we look back through the years, then it is that the more important parts assume their just relations. We are calling many a man a hero now, who in his own day was not once looked upon in that light by those who knew him best. This is where the true study of history comes in. It helps us to appreciate and understand the present, and more correctly to estimate the men and deeds of the past."

"We've had the pleasure of hearing about

many of the deeds of Frontenac and his men this summer," suggested Bert, glancing at Bob as he spoke.

"That's so! that's so!" exclaimed Miss Bessie. "Bob must tell us some more! It's his turn now."

Bob certainly had no desire to air his information before the assembly; but as all joined in demanding a "story," he was compelled to respond, and after explaining that it was only a "chapter" in the narrative, he began:—

"I'd just reached the part where I was to tell of Phips and his doings. He was, as you all know, made the leader of the New England forces, at least on the sea, in those closing years of the seventeenth century. He was a man of tremendous energy, but not a very careful or wise leader; for he did not make careful preparations when he set forth on his expeditions, and, as far as brains are concerned, he was no match for Frontenac.

"The Iroquois, English, and Dutch were all now against the French; and though they didn't work very well together, the common hatred of the common enemy was sufficiently strong to keep them from quarrelling. Bos-

ton was in arms, for reports of what they were likely to suffer were afloat, and the English had already marched from Albany ; but the land expedition did not amount to much, for Frontenac had made the very most of such forces as he had, and the effect was really a failure, though a few houses were burned, a few prisoners taken, and a few men killed. But the work of Phips was of another kind. He had organized a fleet, and set sail for Quebec. He had had reports that the place could be taken if he struck with energy. Something besides energy was needed, however ; for it was a very different matter, when he was to meet a man like Frontenac, from what it was when he was looking for gold in a Spanish galleon sunk off the shores of the West Indies."

"Um," murmured Bert.

"What did you say?" demanded Bob, sharply, pausing for a moment at the interruption.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Bert, hastily ; "I agree with you perfectly."

"Frontenac had already received word of the coming of Phips and his fleet, and he didn't let the grass grow under his feet,

as he began to prepare Quebec to withstand the attack. Of course the place was wonderfully well fortified by nature; but Frontenac assembled all the men he could muster, dug ditches, made embankments, which he flanked, at frequent intervals, by heavy towers of stone. Batteries were provided; and as he had sent word far and near to the men and militia to come to the defence of the place, only two days had passed before he had about twenty-seven hundred men within the defences of the old town. Men had been stationed at intervals along the river, to keep a sharp outlook for the coming of the terrible English fleet.

“At last one morning, before it was fairly light, they discovered the approaching sails; and when the sun had risen, there was the entire fleet in plain sight. There were four large ships, and many schooners and brigs of no inconsiderable size, and fishing craft, almost too numerous to mention. Altogether, there were thirty-four vessels in the approaching fleet; and Frontenac might well have been excited and alarmed over his prospects, as I have not the slightest doubt he was, for all the vessels seemed to be alive with men, and

the English, whatever their faults, in the New World or in the Old, are not cowards.

“But Phips had made a great many mistakes, and was soon to make many more. His vessels were not well provisioned, the winds had been against him, and he had stopped to hold many a parley with his fellow-officers, instead of going ahead and leading his own men. He had captured two or three French vessels on his way, and among his prisoners he found some people of standing and influence. From them he learned that Quebec could not really withstand either a long siege or a sharp, hard attack, which was true then; but Frontenac was not one to sit down and idly repine, and had already been doing wonderful things, to place the city he was to defend in a much better condition.

“Phips finally came to anchor near Quebec, and the first thing he did was to send one of his inferior officers, with a flag of truce, in a boat to the shore. Four of the French canoes came out to meet it, and when the Frenchmen on board heard that he had a message from Phips for Frontenac, they received him into one of their

canoes, and took him to the dock. There they blindfolded him, and two men were to lead him to the governor.

“The college boys sing, that Jordan is a hard road to travel; but I imagine it is smooth as ice compared with what that blindfolded Englishman found the streets of Quebec that day. They led him up and down, and out and in, and back and forth; they made him climb over stones and walls; they let him bump his head and stumble over logs, and all the time there was a great crowd around him, though of course he couldn't see it, shouting, laughing, jeering, taunting, and declaring it was the best game of ‘blind-man's buff’ they ever had had.

“At last they took him into the room where Frontenac was waiting for him, and tore the bandage from his eyes. The poor Englishman might well have been puzzled, as indeed he was, by what he saw. Frontenac, who was himself a very striking man in his appearance, was surrounded by many of his leading officers and men, and all were dressed as if they were about to be presented to King Louis himself. Silks, and velvets, and ribbons, powdered wigs,

gold and silver lace, swords and military dress were all there; and when Frontenac and the others looked at the poor fellow, all bruised and bleeding, I don't believe he thought the English were going to scare the Frenchman as badly as Phips had prophesied.

“At last the messenger managed to get his breath, and gave to Frontenac the letter Phips had sent. It was a blustering little note, demanding the surrender of the town at once, and declaring that, if an answer was not given within an hour, dire events would immediately follow.

“When the letter had been read, the messenger pulled his watch out of his pocket, and called Frontenac's attention to the time of day. The governor pretended not to see it, and coolly and scornfully declared he would not keep the man waiting even for the one short hour, but that he could go back to Phips and tell him he wasn't afraid of him and all England, new or old.

“This wasn't exactly the reply that had been expected; but the astonished messenger requested Frontenac to put his reply in writing. This the governor

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refused to do, and declared he preferred a reply by the mouth of the cannon.

“And then the messenger was blindfolded again, led back to the boats, and so returned to his leader, well aware that it was not the end, but only the beginning of trouble.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE END OF FRONTENAC.

“It seems to be a very easy matter,” continued Bob, “to find the weaknesses in a man who did not succeed, and to forget all the mistakes of a man who has been successful. So looking back now upon Phips, it doesn’t seem to require any very great ability to see where he might have done much better than he did. Of course I can’t give you all the points, for all I’m fitted for is to tell the story as I’ve found it in the histories.

“Phips had no lack of personal bravery, — no one supposes that, — but he certainly was not a success as the leader of men in an expedition such as that he had charge of in 1690. After he received the disappointing reply from Frontenac, even then he might have done something if he had gone ahead and acted promptly ; but he called another council of his fellow-officers, and where there

were many men, of course there were many minds.

“At last they agreed upon a plan of attack. The militia were to be landed just a little way below Quebec, cross the river by a ford, and fall upon the rear of the town. Some of the smaller vessels were to help by holding back the Frenchmen with the fire of their guns, and then were to land supplies for the soldiers. When all these things had been properly attended to, Phips with the larger boats was to use his cannon on the front of the town, and under the cover of his guns land two hundred more men. He decided upon this plan against the honest advice of some of his prisoners, who suggested the use of an approach which Wolfe afterward tried with wonderful success.

“But even while they were debating and talking over the scheme, the time for using it was gone. Still Phips delayed, and kept on delaying, until a lot of the very best of the French forces had come to the aid of Frontenac. When at last Phips was ready to act, his men spent an hour in singing and shouting ‘God save King William,’ and kept their fifes and drums going as if they

expected the walls of Quebec were going to fall by the noise they could make.

“After the first part of the plan was put into execution, Phips became so eager that he was not willing to wait until he received word of the success of his men, but moved up nearer the town. Just before he opened the cannonade, the French guns began at him. They kept it up; but the English didn't do more than make a huge din, and raise a cloud of smoke. The aim of the gunners was poor, the guns were light, and practically they didn't do any damage at all to the old town.

“They stopped when darkness fell, but before it was fairly light on the following morning they were at it again, the French leading off once more. The English vessels now began to suffer terribly, and one after another dropped out of the fight. Almost all their ammunition was gone, and they apparently hadn't been able to hit anything but the rocks, and they weren't always sure of them.

“The leader of the land force hadn't done any better, and at last he left his men, while he himself went back to talk it over with Phips. While he was gone his men

started on without him, and to make a long story short, they were soundly beaten, though they fought hard, as Englishmen always do. Of course Quebec felt relieved, especially when Phips took all his men back on board his ships and withdrew behind the island of Orleans. Very likely he'd have gone farther, but his fleet was in such a condition that he couldn't manage it. They went to work to try to repair the damage, Phips himself working with the men; for you see he'd been a carpenter once upon a time, and I fancy was more of a success as a hewer of wood than he was as admiral of a fleet.

“The French now knew that Phips had had enough; but as three vessels were coming from France with supplies and money on board, they were very much afraid that the Englishmen would meet and capture them all. So some men went down the river right past the English boats in the darkness and got word to the ships, which hid till Phips passed them; but when the poor fellow at last returned to Boston, that town was as gloomy as Frontenac and Quebec were hilarious. Frontenac had again shown that he was the best man on the

continent, and for a time even his enemies were bound to acknowledge that much, too.

“Well, the troubles were not ended, by any manner of means. I haven't the time nor you the patience to go into all the details of the years that followed. Everybody, Indians and all, were soon stirring again, and some terrible things happened in the region of Maine and New Brunswick. There were fearful raids by the red men, and brave deeds performed by the English settlers. The Mohawks joined in the fray; they were against Frontenac and the French, you know, but in the end it seemed as if everything had played into the hands of the bold leader of the French.

“Of course he had his troubles, and lots of them. The Jesuits were very jealous of his increased power; but they had to be very sly, for Frontenac was not in a position where he could be very easily disturbed. He'd been successful, and that was sufficient to tie the people to him. The war continued in Acadia and Newfoundland, sometimes one side victorious, and sometimes the other; but the balance all the while seemed to be in favor of Frontenac.

“It had come to pass that Frontenac

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believed he had held back the English, and that his chief problem now lay with the Indians and the Iroquois. They, too, began to talk some as if they didn't want to fight the great Frenchman much longer; but to the propositions that the governor made they were not quite ready to listen. And no one can blame them, for his invitations, though they were exceedingly cordial, were very much after 'the spider and the fly' order. To make matters still worse, the western Indians began to be troublesome once more, and seemed to be in great fear of the Iroquois. As the fur trade was largely dependent upon the continued loyalty of these same western Indians, Frontenac made up his mind that he must do something more than just 'talk' to the terrible Iroquois. And something was soon done, too.

"The fort over here at Kingston — Fort Frontenac — had been destroyed some years before this time, and never had been rebuilt. The Jesuits didn't want to have it restored; for they knew well enough, if it was, that it would put a great weapon in the hands of Frontenac, whom they hated with a perfect hatred, and feared as much as they hated. You see, he'd have had the full

control of the fur trade, if that strong fort was in his hands, for he could, and doubtless would, make all the traders stop there on their way from the lakes; and the trades that would then be made would not help to make the Jesuits any richer nor Frontenac any poorer.

“So when they found out what the governor was planning to do with the old fort, they sent a protest to Louis, so strong that the king could not do otherwise than command Frontenac not to rebuild. But he had done that already, before the word came from the king, and I doubt not intended to do it all the time, before he could be stopped. That’s a way some military and naval commanders have, of going ahead without orders, and explaining things afterward. At all events, that’s just what Frontenac did; and then he mustered the troops, friendly Indians and militia, and set forth to inflict such a blow upon the Onondagas — whom he thought to be the most powerful or influential of the Iroquois — that never again would he have trouble from them.

“He had altogether in his force about twenty-two hundred men. A lot of Indians

in their canoes moved in advance, then followed bateaux loaded with soldiers, and others with cannon, and then more soldiers, and as a rear guard came more of the regulars and Indians. It was midsummer, and this old river must have presented a wonderful sight, almost covered as it was with this fleet. They didn't stop very much on the way, and as it was a time of the year when they hadn't much to fear from the weather, they made good time. Of course they had trouble dragging the heavy bateaux up the rapids, but they didn't seem to mind little things like that, and kept straight on their way.

“Frontenac at this time was seventy-seven years old, and so feeble in body that when his troops marched across the country he had to be carried part of the way in a big arm-chair; but the men were devoted to him, and the friendly Indians the most enthusiastic of all.

“When at last they came near to the village of the Onondagas, they discovered that not an enemy was there. There were great corn-fields stretching out on every side, and for two days the disappointed Frenchmen, as they couldn't find the men they wanted to kill, spent their time in

cutting down and burning the corn. They sent a detachment to the village of the Oneidas, but as that tribe professed to be friendly, there wasn't much satisfaction in that. Some wanted to go on and burn the leading village of the Cayugas, but as Frontenac thought that was useless, and as the Onondagas wouldn't come back to be shot, he decided that the best thing to be done was to go back to Montreal. He had made a great demonstration, had frightened the hostile Indians, and destroyed their supplies for the coming winter; but as far as punishing the Onondagas themselves, he hadn't done very much, though he wrote a long and very enthusiastic letter to King Louis, in which he gave a very glowing account of the great victory he had won, and incidentally referred to the fact that he would not be averse to receiving some substantial tokens of the monarch's favor as the reward of his bravery.

"It was not all idle talk, either; for the Onondagas had, indeed, been very much impressed by what he had done. They sent some of their greatest sachems to Montreal, to confer with Frontenac; but while their negotiations were going on,

word came of the peace in Europe, and as one historian has said, 'the scratch of a pen at Ryswick ended the conflict in America, at least as far as concerned the civilized combatants.' How long, and how deep and lasting that so-called peace was, you all know.

"Poor old Frontenac found, however, that he was having anything but a peaceful time. His old enemies, the Jesuits, were busy again, and doing their best to undermine his peace and power.

"It was in November, 1698, after the last ship had sailed for France, and New France would be locked in snow and ice for a half year, that Frontenac gave up the struggle and laid down the burden of life. On the twenty-eighth of that month, after a brief illness, the brave old man died. He was greatly beloved by the common people, the best man to deal with the Indians the French ever had in this continent, a fearless soldier, a very warm friend to whomsoever he was a friend, and a bitter enemy of those he hated. He was certainly a magnificent leader, and one of the ablest men in all the colonial history of the New World. Some of his enemies, however, were so bitter

against him that even after he was dead and gone they continued to write and say scurrilous things about him, and seemed never able to forgive him. Perhaps one cause was that at Frontenac's own request his body was buried in the church of the Récollets, and not in the cathedral where the Jesuits were in charge, and that was an affront they could never ignore.

"I didn't mean to talk so long," said Bob, apologetically, as his story ended; "but when I get to talking of the old hero — why, it almost seems to me that I can see him myself, with his fleet on the river, or leading his men against his enemies. I don't wonder that so many hotels and islands and places in the St. Lawrence are named for him. The wonder is there aren't more."

A round of hand clapping greeted Bob, and for a time the conversation turned upon the exploits of the old warrior, who in his own day had made friends and enemies in almost equal proportions.

"It's wonderful the way some men's deeds live after them," said Miss Bessie. "I wonder what Frontenac would have thought if he could have looked ahead and

seen this party, two hundred years after his death, listening to the story of his deeds."

"He'd have felt 'proud to know you,'" said Bert, as he rose from the ground on which he had been seated. "You know what Alexander said when he stood by the tomb of Achilles, don't you?"

"If we don't, it isn't from any fault of yours," laughed Bob. "Jock, isn't it time we were starting for the house-boat?"

"It is that!" replied Jock; and soon afterward, with a merry party of young people on board, for the young ladies were to accompany Mr. Clarke and the boys, and enjoy the moonlight sail among the islands, the yacht was ploughing its way swiftly through the silent waters of the great river.

CHAPTER XXX.

A PLOT.

As the yacht sped on in the moonlight, moving almost as silently as the silent shadows about it, the full beauty of the wonderful region seemed more impressive than ever it had been. Music from some hotel, or the singing of some party out for an evening sail, came floating across the water; and softened as the notes were by distance, and the weirdness increased by the inability to see the singers, the effect was almost like that of moving among the spirits with which the Indians had declared the islands were peopled.

Nor were the young people on board the yacht merely silent listeners to the sounds, for their own songs frequently were heard, and their light-hearted laughter awoke the echoes of many a rocky and uninhabited island they passed in their course.

Bert and Miss Bessie were seated together

in the bow of the yacht, and it became evident to the other members of the party that the young lady was listening to some words that greatly pleased her. Bert would be speaking in low tones for a time, and then the delight of Miss Bessie would find vent in a laugh which for a moment attracted the attention of all on board. What it was that Bert was saying no one, of course, knew; but if Bob could have heard his words, perhaps his peace of mind might have been destroyed, for it was nothing less than a plot the two young people were concocting, and as it directly concerned Bob himself, that young gentleman might naturally have been supposed to be greatly interested. But as it was, he remained in ignorance of the scheme, and days elapsed before he learned the part he was to play; and his awakening, when it came, was as sharp as his chagrin was keen.

The boys at last were landed at their house-boat, which they found undisturbed, the good nights were spoken, and the graceful little yacht soon disappeared among the shadows; and not long afterward silence rested over all.

In the days that followed, a continual

variety was found in the sports and enjoyments of our boys. There was golf on the links of one of the larger islands, excursions to points of interest on both sides of the great river; there was a day spent with friends who belonged to the St. Lawrence yacht club, and the bright red sails of the graceful boats presented a beautiful and somewhat startling sight as they swept swiftly over the water; there was bowling on the days when rain prevented out-door sports, and almost every week the picnic and cruise to which Mr. Clarke and the young people of his household invited our boys. The fishing was unusually excellent, and the catches the boys made were so numerous and great as almost to take away the pride of the young fishermen in their success.

Meanwhile the house-boat was moved from place to place, and every new anchoring ground was declared by the enthusiastic young occupants of the floating domicile to be better than the others. The only one to object to the frequent change was Bob; but his protests were overruled by his comrades, who declared that if his wish had been followed the house-boat would have remained

in one spot all summer. Whatever Bob's objections may have been, he was too wise to emphasize them over much; but still he managed several times to go with Jed to the region where that one glimpse of a sunken cannon had been obtained. With all their efforts, however, the old gun had not been seen again. Jed began to feel somewhat discouraged, and declared that the search would never amount to anything now, and that mortgage on his little home must remain as a terrible incubus for many weary days.

Bob had endeavored to cheer up the boatman; but though he was in no wise minded to give over the search, even he began to lose hope. Many hours they had spent close to the shore of the familiar island, but whether they had made a mistake in marking the exact location, or the condition of the water varied, so that they were not able to see clearly to the bottom of the river, he did not know. At all events, the longed-for sight was not seen.

One day Bert had taken a skiff and mischievously followed Bob and Jed, keeping well out of sight, we may be sure. He had landed on the side of the island opposite to

that where the searchers were busied, and creeping stealthily through the brush, had gained a point where, unobserved himself, he nevertheless could plainly behold all the movements of his friends. Grimly he had watched them as they rowed back and forth, both peering over into the water, and striving to see that which it was only too evident still remained unseen. Perhaps if Bob had seen the face of his friend, he might have concluded that the lesson he had given him a few weeks before had not been as well received, after all, as he had expected it to be.

So matters remained until August was almost gone, and still the shotted cannon was as much of a mystery as ever it had been. It is not to be supposed that Bob had gone to the spot every day, for that was by no means true. The most he had done was to arrange it so that he was assigned to Jed's boat when they set forth on their daily expeditions from the house-boat, and going to or coming from the fishing grounds, somehow this one place was rowed over. Occasionally, when it had been possible to avoid the suspicions of his companions, he and Jed had gone there for a few

hours alone, and their investigations were made without the fear of discovery. But, as we have said, thus far all their efforts had been unrewarded, and success seemed to be as far distant as it had been at the beginning of the summer.

It was in this closing week in August that another one of the frequent picnics had been arranged, and the boys were to sail over to the "The Rocks" in the early morning, and meet the party there which was to embark on Mr. Clarke's yacht. There had been frequent conferences between Bert and Miss Bessie, and how much they had had to do with the selection of the island where dinner was to be had that day, perhaps they only could have explained. At all events, the very island off whose shore Bert believed Bob thought the sunken cannon was resting was the one selected, though the landing-place was on the opposite side. Before the yacht started from the dock, Miss Bessie beckoned to Bert, and as the eager young fellow joined her in the dining room of the cottage, she took from the sideboard a mysterious package, about the size of a peck measure, and, holding it up in her hands, said : —

"I have it at last, though you'd never believe all the trouble I've had to get it, if I were to tell you."

"It's all right, anyway, as long as you have it," responded Bert, eagerly. "Where did you get it?"

"Part of it at Clayton, and a part at Alexandria Bay. I've had to pick it up by degrees. One of the girls found it one day, and she almost spoiled the whole thing by asking me at the dinner-table what I was going to do with all those funny little bits I had."

"You didn't tell her, did you?"

"Well, I should say I didn't!"

"That's good! Have you scoured them all up?"

"Yes; they shine almost like silver — or gold." And Miss Bessie laughed lightly as she spoke.

"I'll get even with Bob now," said Bert, warmly. "He thought he'd teach me a lesson, but he'll find out that's a game two can play at. Just because he's been a pedagogue this spring he thinks he can keep up his schoolmaster airs, and teach all creation. I'd never have thought of the scheme if it hadn't been for you."

Miss Bessie laughed lightly, as she replied: "Wait till the end comes. We don't want to rejoice too soon."

"No, I suppose we don't; but it's as good as done now. I wonder what Bob will have to say when he finds he's the one to be taught a good lesson this time? He'll rue the day he tried to teach me."

"You don't think he'll be angry, do you?" inquired the girl, somewhat anxiously.

"Angry? No, he won't be angry. You can rest assured that if Bob can keep it to himself, not another soul will ever hear of it. The only thing I'm afraid of is, that he'll manage somehow to get out of it without any one seeing him. He's sharp, Bob is; and the way he can twist things and turn them against a fellow beats all."

"I believe you're afraid to go on, now that we've got everything ready."

"Afraid? Afraid of what? I'm not afraid of anything except that Bob may get out of it without being seen. That would almost break my tender heart. But if we don't start pretty soon, some one will come in here, and the whole thing will fizzle out."

Miss Bessie quickly thrust the bundle

into a basket, and covered it over with some of the things which were necessary for the day, and then Bert lifted the burden in his hand, and together they started for the dock, where their friends were already assembled.

“You’re late,” shouted Ben, as the two approached. “What mischief have you been plotting now? What have you in that basket?”

“You’ll learn at the proper time,” responded Miss Bessie, as she deposited the basket with the provisions, leaving it, as Bert afterward suggested, so exposed that Bob would be certain to discover its contents. She explained that she had left it as she did purposely, and that its presence would be ignored for the very reason that, to all appearances, it had nothing to conceal.

It was about noon-time when the party arrived at the destination which had been agreed upon. There dinner was prepared, and for a time Bert was fearful that the plot had been discovered, for it was seldom that Bob had entered into the spirit of the occasion as he was then doing. He laughed and told stories, and made fre-

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quent references to the curiosity of some people concerning the traditions and reports that concerned the very island upon which they had landed. It was true, he did not speak of the story of the lost cannon, but there were many indirect references to matters which Bert well understood were thrusts at himself; and when he glanced slyly at Miss Bessie, he perceived that that demure young lady apparently did not see the deeper meaning in Bob's words at all.

After dinner, when all were seated on the ground, on a high bluff near the shore, Miss Bessie was suddenly seized with a desire to row around the island. "I've been past here lots of times," she declared, "but I've never been close to the shore. Mr. Bliss, do you think you can row well enough to take me in a skiff without tipping over? If you do, I wish you'd go with me."

"Delighted!" murmured Bert, as he made a sudden dive from the midst of the company.

In a brief time he had secured one of the two skiffs which the yacht had in tow, and had received Miss Bessie on board.

Apparently this departure had been ignored by the others, but Bert nevertheless glanced apprehensively about him, as he grasped the oars, and prepared to start.

“Have you the ——?” he inquired in a low voice.

The young lady nodded her head, and in a moment the skiff was moving swiftly over the water. Up to the head of the island Bert rowed, and then turning the point, rowed more slowly, as the skiff, swept on by the current, skirted the other shore. As he came near to certain well-remembered spots, he rested on his oars, and after glancing keenly at the trees on the island, and down into the depths, he said:—

“This is the place, Miss Bessie. Be quick, or some one will see us. I’m half afraid Bob will come across the island and see us yet.”

The girl took the bundle from the bottom of the skiff, and untying the knot into which the towel that held all had been tied, she said, “Shall I put everything in one place, or shall I scatter it?”

“Drop the most in one spot, then scatter the rest. It’ll be like baiting up the fish.”

In response she took many little pieces

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of brightly polished tin and brass, and dropped them into the water. "I can see them," she declared, as she peered over the side of the boat, and gazed at the bottom.

"Good! Drop a few more, and we'll scatter the rest."

As soon as this had been accomplished, Bert rowed swiftly back to the place where their friends had been left; but his own consternation was as great as that of Miss Bessie when he learned that Bob and Jed had taken the other skiff, a few minutes after their own departure, and had gone, no one seemed to know where.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD.”

THE return of Bert and Miss Bessie with the skiff had at once aroused a desire on the part of other members of the party to indulge in a row among the islands, which here were very numerous, and not so large as they were in other parts of the river.

As the young people came running down to the shore, Bert made a wry face, and in a low voice said to his companion: “It’s too bad, but I’ll have to resign my place, for Jock or Ben will want to row. I’m sorry, for I wanted to go around to the other side, and I haven’t any doubt that we should find Bob and the boatman there. It’s too bad, but it can’t be helped.”

“Never mind,” responded Miss Bessie. “I’ll tell you what to do; you just go across the island,—it isn’t very far,—and you can see from the shore what’s going on; that is, if anything is really going on there. I’ll

stay in the skiff, and I'm sure I can arrange it so that everybody will want to row around the island. If we should come upon them just when you got there, and we should all find them looking after that glittering gold —" The young girl laughed at the thought, and as at that moment the friends arrived at the shore, she ceased speaking, and turned to listen to the words of the eager group.

"It's too bad Bob and Jed have gone off in the other skiff," said Jock, regretfully. "There'd be room enough for every one, if we only had that boat, too. You stay and take my place, Bert."

"Thank you, not this day," replied Bert, as he leaped ashore. "I've been around the island once, and it's the most beautiful ride I ever had. I don't want to deprive you all of that pleasure."

Instantly there was a desire expressed by the girls who filled the skiff to take the route indicated by the artful Bert; and Jock and Ben, both of whom were rowing, at once headed the skiff toward the upper end of the island.

"Be careful!" called Mr. Clarke, as he saw the load start. "You've a heavy cargo

on board. The current is very swift in places."

"We'll be careful," shouted Jock, in reply.

The skiff was moving slowly against the strong current, and it required all the efforts of both the young oarsmen to make much progress. The boat, however, moved steadily forward, and as soon as it approached the head of the island Bert turned and ran swiftly across the island, toward the opposite shore, where he hoped to discover both Bob and Jed.

As he ran, he was thinking of the scheme which he and Miss Bessie had concocted for the dire punishment of Bob; for Bert had told his friend of the lesson his class-mate had endeavored to teach him. It is true, Miss Bessie had laughed heartily at the recital, and even Bert had been compelled to smile glumly, as he told of the number of times he had plunged into the cold waters of the St. Lawrence, and how Bob had urged him to continue his efforts even after his teeth were chattering from the cold. All that could be forgiven, however; but the time for fasting and meditation which Bob had secured for his friend,

when he had left him alone on the island, was another matter entirely, and could not be passed over in silence. Perhaps the lesson had been deserved; but as Bert thought of the possible uses to which the story might be put, and the bantering of his college mates if once they should learn of the occurrence, he knew that his only hope of safety lay in imparting a lesson equal to that which he himself had received.

As a result of his deliberations, aided by the quick-witted girl, it had been decided to secure a lot of pieces of bright tin and brass, and by dropping them into the water near the places where the sunken cannon were supposed to be, perhaps the renewed efforts on the part of Bob and the boatman, if they should discover the glittering bits in their search, might lead to results which would either cause Bob to be silent, or else leave such a balance in Bert's favor that he himself would feel safe to refer to the event, and place the keen-witted Bob upon the defensive. That would be a result worth striving for, for it was seldom that any one succeeded in getting the better of Bob.

The bits of shining metal had been secured, and, as we know, that very morn-

ing had been placed "where they would do the most good," as Bert tersely expressed it. And now all that remained was to discover whether the bait had been taken and Bob and the boatman had been led to make exertions which would be a never ending source of delight to Bert and all to whom he chose to disclose his secret.

As the eager boy ran swiftly across the island, he could not keep himself from wondering how it was that the usually cool Bob had become so determined in his search for the mythical cannon. He forgot all about his own eagerness; but then that was not unlike Bert, as all his friends well knew. The fires in his heart burned fiercely, but soon burned themselves out. The steady determination of the more resolute Bob was an element he lacked, and, indeed, failed to comprehend.

By this time he had come close to the shore he was seeking, and at once became more cautious in his movements; for to be discovered then would frustrate every plan, and might place himself in the very predicament in which, with no ill-will, and with apparent generosity, he was entirely willing that his classmate should be found.

The clump of cedar trees within which he stopped had a decidedly familiar aspect. It was here that he had donned the suit of clothing on that well-remembered morning, and for a brief moment had given his friend such great credit for his thoughtfulness — a feeling which had suddenly departed when he came to understand the exact condition of affairs, and had discovered that Bob had deserted him, leaving him to his "fasting and meditation," as if he had been of no more account than the rocks on the river bottom.

The memory of his wrongs increased Bert's eagerness, but even then he was hardly prepared for the sight that greeted his eyes when he peered forth from among the cedars; for there, not more than five yards from the shore, and directly in front of him, was the skiff he was seeking, and in it were Bob and the boatman. Jed held the oars, but he was not rowing, and was only holding the head of the boat down the stream, allowing the current to carry them onward by its own motion. Both men were peering into the depth of the river with an eagerness that was highly pleasing to the watching Bert, and it was only with the

greatest difficulty that he restrained his impulse to shout and encourage the seekers, by pointing out the spot where they might discover something to their own advantage.

However, he remained silent; for both were speaking now, and though their tones were low, their words could be distinctly heard.

"I b'lieve I'm about ready to give up the whole thing," Jed was saying.

"You don't want to give up, after all the work we've put in it," said Bob.

"I don't *want* to, but I guess I'll have to, whether I want to or not."

"The game isn't lost till the last man is out."

"I'm afeared that time's come."

"No, no. Just think how Bert and Ethan will feel when they see us come home with a boat full of gold."

The watching Bert hugged himself in his delight as he heard himself referred to, and the impulse to shout became almost uncontrollable. By a supreme effort he mastered the desire, and then leaned forward to listen more intently, for the current was bearing the skiff down the stream, and the men

would soon be lost to sight and hearing both.

"I'm not thinkin' o' Ethan," replied Jed. "I'm a thinkin' o' myself. I wonder heow I'd feel if Ethan should find eout what we've been up to. He'd have the laugh on me, that's what he would, and I wouldn't never hear the last on it, no time, never, nohow."

"Ethan won't hear of it if we fail, and if we succeed we shan't care how much he hears."

"Heow d'ye know he won't hear of it if we fail?"

"Because Bert is the only one who knows anything about it, and *he* won't speak of it. You may rest assured of that, for I've taught him a lesson he won't forget very soon."

"No, he won't forget it, that's right," murmured Bert, in his hiding-place; "and unless I'm greatly mistaken, he won't be the only one, either."

The skiff had by this time drifted so far away that the words of the men could no longer be heard; but Bert could see that they were still peering down into the water with an eagerness as keen as that which

they had displayed when they had been nearer the place where he was concealed. If they should not return, the lesson would still be lost; and at the thought Bert stepped farther out toward the shore. The place where he and Miss Bessie had dropped the glittering bits of tin had been a few feet farther out in the stream than the course Bob and the boatman had followed, and their efforts would be in vain if the skiff did not return.

Bert waited impatiently, as he watched the skiff, and his delight was great when he perceived that his desires were to be realized; for already Jed had turned the boat about and was coming back, this time a little farther out in the stream. If they kept on until they were as far up the stream as the cedars along which Bert was standing, they must surely discover the shining bits on the bottom of the river.

Bert stepped hastily back, though he could still see the boat and the men plainly. The time for which he had been waiting was surely approaching now, he thought. The very sunlight seemed to favor him, for seldom in all the summer had the sun been shining more brightly. The water beneath it became almost as clear as the

air, and the rocks and fallen trees and darting fish could all be plainly discerned. Apparently no one was in the vicinity, and the intense silence was broken only by the sound of the low voices of Bob and Jed, and the occasional stroke of the oars, as the boatman slowly drove the skiff up the stream.

They were approaching the very place now, and Bert's excitement became more and more intense. If they would only keep on until they were over the spot into which the tin had been cast! Bert felt somehow that he would willingly resign all that fame and fortune might have in store for him if only they would do that. Yes, they were surely coming nearer, and apparently there was no purpose to change their course. In a moment more they were directly over the place, and Bert's heart almost stood still as for a moment he thought they were to go on without perceiving the "bait" which had been prepared for their special benefit. Suddenly Bob partly rose from his seat in the stern of the skiff, and leaned farther over the side, as he peered eagerly down into the depths below. Something certainly out of

the ordinary had attracted his attention; and the watching Bert, who had no difficulty in understanding what that "something" was, leaned farther out from the clump of cedars, as he watched the movements of the men in the skiff.

Bob was evidently greatly excited, and said something to his companion which caused him instantly to rest on his oars and join with his friend in gazing into the water beneath them. What they saw still further aroused them, and in a moment Bob stood up and said, in a tone which Bert could plainly hear:—

"Now, Jed, what do you think of that? Doesn't that pay for all the waiting?"

Jed was too much excited to make any coherent reply, but kept the boat moving slowly up and down over the place where the bits had been scattered.

"Now, Jed," said Bob, with increasing excitement, "just think how many times we've been over this spot, and since the first day haven't been able to get a sight of it. Can you see the cannon?"

"No. I don't see no cannon nowhere," replied the boatman.

"That's strange, for I can't see it, either.

Probably we'll find it all right enough. Now, Jed, you hold the boat here, and I'll go down and investigate. I can't swim as well as Bert can, and I almost wish we had the fellow here now."

"He's here all right enough," murmured Bert. "He wouldn't miss this fun for all the shotted cannon Frontenac ever had."

Bob quickly removed his shoes and stockings, and laying aside his coat, hesitated for a moment, and then dropped as he was into the water.

"Glorious! Glorious!" murmured Bert, in his delight. "Keep it up! I wouldn't be a bit discouraged if I were you. There'll be plenty of time for fasting and meditation afterward. Let me see, I went down seventeen times. I hope you'll make it twenty, Bob."

Bob by this time had returned to the surface, but it was evident that his effort to gain the bottom had been unavailing. In a moment, however, and after a brief rest, he released his hold upon the side of the skiff, and again disappeared beneath the water.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

DESPITE his efforts, Bob was not able to remain on the bottom of the river long enough to grasp any of the glittering pieces of metal. The water was deep, and the current swift, and as he was not an expert swimmer, he soon concluded that his efforts would be useless.

The boatman then made the attempt, first having removed his shoes and stockings, but it was not until he had made the third descent that he succeeded in returning to the surface with one of the coveted bits in his hand. By the aid of his companion he clambered into the boat, and as he held forth his prize, Bob took it, examined it eagerly, and then in a tone of disgust, which was clearly heard by Bert on the bank, said: —

“Pshaw! It’s nothing but tin.”

“Isn’t it silver?” inquired Jed, anxiously.

"No more silver than I am. It's tin, nothing but tin. If we' looked carefully, we might have known it. I wonder how these pieces came to be there?" he added quietly.

Bert, meanwhile, had at that moment perceived the other skiff approaching, and as he knew its occupants were able to see the sight which he himself beheld, he stepped forth from his hiding-place and shouted in a voice which could have been heard far up the river: —

"Ha! Ha! 'All that glitters is not gold.' Permit me to congratulate you, my friends, upon the success which has crowned your efforts. 'Perseverance and all that sort of thing,' you know."

Both Bob and Jed looked up quickly at the unexpected hail, and instantly Bob understood. Quickly repressing any irritation he might have felt, he laughed good-naturedly as he said: —

"Then you're the villain in the play, are you? I might have known it. We'll call it quits, Bert."

"Quits? Quits? I quit a long time ago. I did my best to induce you to follow my worthy example; but when a man gets

bitten with this money madness, there's no knowing what will come of it. Hi! Come up here and congratulate Bob on his discovery!" he shouted to the friends in the approaching skiff.

Bob looked up, and for the first time became aware of the presence of the other members of the party. For a moment he hesitated, as if he was about to grasp the oars and seek safety in flight; but quickly realizing that there was no escape from his predicament, and that sooner or later the outcome must be met, he quickly resolved to face matters then and there.

Assuming an air of indifference he was far from feeling, he laughed and, holding up to view the little piece of bright tin, said: "That's right. Come one, come all; the more the merrier."

The other skiff swiftly came alongside, but it was evident that no one besides Bert and Miss Bessie was aware of the meaning of the strange incident. Both Bob and Jed were dripping wet, and the presence of Bert dancing about on the bank only added to their confusion.

"Permit me, my friends," called Bert, "to present to you the greatest discoverers

of modern times. Wealth, untold wealth, lies all along this great river, but no longer is it to be allowed to remain in its concealment. The great historian, Mr. Bob Darnell, after making his learned investigations into the career of Frontenac and Cartier, has transferred his attentions to the bottom of the St. Lawrence. Behold the evidences of wealth restored from the buried treasures! The shotted cannon no longer hides its guilty secret. It has been compelled to disgorge, and as a slight token of — of — of — its munificent marvellousness, the aforesaid Bob Darnell will hold forth to your view some of the valuable and long-concealed treasure he has recovered. Come, Bob, let us all see that piece of tin."

As all of the company except Miss Bessie still stared blankly, first at Bert, and then at the dripping Bob, as if they were not able yet to comprehend the meaning of the strange scene, Bob rose in his skiff, and, holding forth the bit of tin, said calmly: "What Bert means is just this. We heard that Frontenac, or some of the early Frenchmen, had buried some cannon shotted with gold and silver somewhere hereabouts in the river, and so Jed and I have quietly

been looking up the spot. We weren't the only ones interested, as Bert can explain to you if he will, or as I will if he won't; but I'll own up that the search hasn't amounted to anything. Some one, perhaps Bert — or — or — some one else can explain how these little pieces of tin found their way here;” and as he spoke, Bob looked keenly at Miss Bessie, who only laughed merrily, and pretended to ignore the question in his eyes.

“Paid in his own coin,” shouted Bert, delightedly.

As soon as the party understood the purport of the strange discovery, a shout of laughter arose, in which Bob himself joined, with as good a grace as he could assume. It was not the most enjoyable of experiences; but he could not find it in his heart to blame Bert, for the lad certainly had had ample cause for the retaliation.

After a few minutes had passed, Bob said: “The house-boat isn't very far from here, and I think Jed and I had better go back there and get some dry clothing. Shall we come back to this island, or will the yacht meet us there?”

“Do you really want to abandon the enterprise?” inquired Bert, with mock

eagerness. "After so many attempts, it seems too bad to give it up now, especially when your efforts would be watched with interest by a great and appreciative audience."

"We'll bring the yacht around for you," laughed Miss Bessie, as Bob picked up the oars, and began to row swiftly away.

"I say, Bob," called Bert, "there's some more tin over here. Don't you want to get that, too?"

But Bob made no reply, and soon the skiff was lost to sight among the islands.

It was about a half-hour afterward when the yacht stopped at the house-boat, and took Bob on board. The good-natured manner in which he received the bantering of his friends soon deprived even Bert of the pleasure he felt, and as perhaps he feared to carry the matter too far, for reasons which he, at least, well understood, the affair was not referred to after Mr. Clarke said:—

"Our friend Bob, here, is not the only one who has attempted to find those lost cannon. Almost every summer some new party searches for a time, but always without success. I fancy there is no doubt as to

the fact that the cannon were filled with coin, and sunk in the river ; but there is no doubt, either, that they were found afterward by the very ones who had concealed them. At all events, it lends an air of romance to a summer on the St. Lawrence, and though I don't want to preach to you, if you shall have all learned the lesson that, as a rule, money which is easily gotten is not very valuable, perhaps even the lost cannon may not have been entirely useless. There is only one safe and honest rule in life, as far as money is concerned, and that is, for a man to give an equivalent in value for every dollar he receives. Then and then only can he respect himself, and feel that he deserves, whether he receives it or not, the respect of his fellows."

Bob made no reply, although he knew that as far as he was concerned there had been no motive in his heart such as that at which Mr. Clarke had hinted, but he did not deem it wise to attempt to explain at that time.

Three more weeks swiftly followed before the return of our boys to college. Ethan's son, Tom, was with them for a week, and added much to their pleasure, while the

change that was apparent in him was almost as great a source of delight to them as it was to the proud Ethan himself.

"Hum!" remarked Jed one day to Bob. "What do you think? Ethan's goin' a visitin' this winter deown to New York, an' Tom's goin' to pay his fare, both ways. Well, Ethan's never been out o' the country afore, an' very likely he'll enjoy it. I know I had a good time when I went off deown to Mad'son County pickin' hops. I don't bear Ethan no grudge, an' he has a right to feel proud o' that Tom o' his."

The days were still more filled with pleasure and excitement, as blessings are said to brighten as they take their flight. The fishing continued excellent, the canoeing and sailing never lost their novelty, and a marked variety came when, in the September mornings, the boys went duck-shooting on Eel Bay.

All these experiences soon passed, and remained in their memory as parts of a delightful summer. The health-giving breezes, the tonic of the bracing air, the effects of days spent on the open river, were not lost, however, and remained as parts of a renewed life. Doubtless they

all contributed to the success of the following year in college, where, amidst the snow-clad hills of the Berkshires, the experiences of the summer were gone over again many a time, and apparently never lost their freshness or charm. So enthusiastic was Jock over the two summers spent with his friends on the wonderful river that, after sundry conferences with his father, he decided upon another summer there which should be markedly different from its predecessors, and unique in the lives of the four friends. His hopes were more than realized, but the experiences do not properly belong to this book.

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